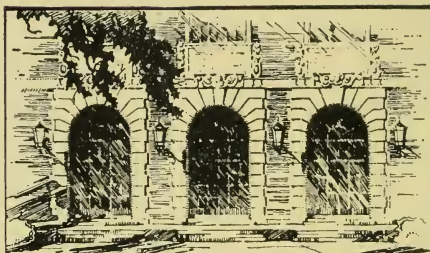




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V A R G A S.



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Chas. White
VARGAS: *from*

J. Davis

A TALE OF SPAIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
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V A R G A S.

CHAPTER XI.

There is no harme done Philautus ; for whether
You love, or Euphues jest, this shall breed no farre.

Euphues and his England.

THE sun that shone upon the two
moors on the top of Alange, was ra-
pidly reaching its utmost height in
the heavens, as the old Count met
Don Felix upon the ramparts of the
white moor, the one coming forth
from his castle, followed by his chap-
lain and his herald, the other ap-
proaching from the surrounding wood
with folded arms, and looks intent
upon the ground. The Conde stop-
ped, and perceiving that his nephew
took no notice of him, he accosted

him with “ Hold up your head, young man, unless you mean to charge me with your bonnet for a lance ; albeit, I have stood the charge of sharper headed lances than that.”

Cachafuto laughed the broad laugh of simple satisfaction ; the slight degree of offence which the Count’s dignity had received from the negligent bearing of his nephew in his presence, was softened into complacency by his own joke ; and in a short time this feeling was increased to merriment by the contaminating influence of the friar’s ha ! ha ! ha !

The pre-occupied Cavallero raised his eyes indeed, and doffed his hat respectfully, though abstractedly ; but he immediately fixed the same gaze upon the glowing heaven above him, with which he had been regarding the earth under his feet.

“ By the sword of Santiago,” exclaimed the Count, “ the youth must be possessed ; hast thou never an exorcism, good father, to dislodge the demon that inhabits him ? ”

“ Your excellency,” replied the friar, “ has furnished me with the fittest instrument wherewith to fright the fiend. The sword of Santiago was that glorious weapon which hewed down one hundred thousand devils, occupying and inhabiting the persons of so many Moors, in the ever memorable and indubitably miraculous battle of——”

“ I know it all, Cachafuto ; but we need neither thy exorcism nor thy legend now, for the weapon has done its work, the invocation has operated, even though sent forth from my unsanctified mouth :—see, his tongue is loosed, the youth speaketh.”

Felix, who, at the Count's exclamation, "by the sword of Santiago," had rapidly turned his head, and half raised his own weapon, repeated the word *espada* several times, and at last burst forth energetically,

" ' Clarions that sound to combat are thy words,
' Thy sighs are lances, and thy tears are swords.'

Swords! oh! good uncle, the aptest appellation! never were the tears of an injured princess so powerfully characterised;

' Thy tears are swords.'

" Art thou mad, Felix?" said the Count.

" Lope would go mad, most excellent uncle, if it should befall him to be interrupted in the composing of such lines. I doubt, however, whether he ever does compose *such* lines."

“ That’s fortunate, considering the risk he runs from interruption,” replied the Count ; “ but, of a verity, I pity thee, Felix ; thou hast turned thy sword into a pen, and now, instead of encountering thine enemies, thou but besmearest thy tablets. I knew thee a soul-stirring lad before thou hadst thy spurs in Flanders. Prithee, tell me, what saint has worked this miracle in thy mind ? ”

“ Thalia ! oh, Thalia ! ” exclaimed Felix ; but he was interrupted by a succession of uneasy questions from Cachafuto.

“ Santa Thalia ! I never read the legend of Santa Thalia ; where is she venerated ? where was she canonized ? what were her miracles ? ”

The Count, who probably anticipated the narration of a long legend, as well as his chaplain, not having the

same disposition to gain legendary information which the friar evinced, prevented Felix from replying, by declaring that his appetite announced the approach of meal time. "Nephew, I have a service for you to perform," added he; "convey my greetings to the wounded knight, together with such offers of hospitality and assistance as may befit the dignity and names of Alange and Velada."

"Bid your herald precede me, Señor Conde, that I may go upon a knightly message in a knightly manner. Send forth thy cracked clarion's shrill voice, sir herald, that it may set my wit on edge to compose an oration equally befitting my character for eloquence, and the Conde's for courtesy."

The herald placed to his lips a brazen instrument of some length, and the unnatural indentations in which seem-

ed also to indicate length of service as well as of form. It gave forth a sound which might have produced a sympathetic blast from any mule that happened to be within hearing ; fortunately, however, the elevated situation of the fortress rendered it inaccessible to quadrupeds. An Oxonian reader will have the identical tone in his imagination, if he only remember the scaring sound which startles the students at Queen's, as its cracked dissonance echoes along the cloisters to call them to *battel*. This blast of the herald's brought to Don Felix's mind his forcible description of the injured Princess's grief, and he shouted forth his last couplet,

Clarions that sound to battle are thy words,
' Thy tears are lances, and thy sighs are swords.'

The Count bent his steps towards the hall, followed by Cachafuto, who was

anxiously examining the index of his memory, to discover the legend of Santa Thalia. The herald turned to the apartment where Vargas lay, advancing a few paces before Don Felix.

Vargas and Meneses were in close conference, receiving and giving the information that has been communicated to the reader in the last chapters, when their ears were assailed by a repetition of the deafening discord, which, when performed in the open air, had not attracted their attention, but being now blown forth at the very threshold of the chamber, shook the door of it upon its hinges. This interruption was immediately followed by the entrance of the noise-producing instrument itself, projected a good yard and half before its bearer, who solemnly announced the approach of Don Felix Davila.

The young Cavallero immediately

appeared, and, with a courteous bow, walked up to the bed of the invalid. In an assumed manner, which, when coupled with the tenour of his discourse, Vargas could not but take for mockery, he addressed him thus :—

“ Unfortunate adversary of a less fortunate rival, fortune has fortuitously cast upon you this misfortune, that the fortunate possessor of this fortification, may have the opportunity of employing his fortune in succouring the unfortunate.

“ The hospitality which the hospitable character of your noble host renders even to those who are hostile to him, has commissioned me to offer you hospitage without demanding hostage, declaring that he heartily hopes that you will hospitate in this castle, even as a hostelry, lamenting that your hostilities are likely to render it a hospital to you.

“ The entire devotion with which I have devoted myself——”

It is impossible to say how long Don Felix would have continued to string together this unmeaning combination of similar syllables. It was the vice of the Spanish poetasters of that time, to seek after all sorts of literary monstrosities, and to depart as far as possible from nature in the expression of their thoughts. Lope de Vega and Cervantes had just risen to purify the taste of the times ; and their appearance in the literary world had excited a poetical ferment in the fashionable society of Spain, which only served at first to draw forth all the froth and all the dross which corrupted it, that the power of their genius might afterwards cast them off.

Vargas interrupted Don Felix in the beginning of the third strophe of his rhapsody by remarking, that

if he did not believe it to be incompatible with the known courtesy of the Count of Alange, to suffer a defenceless sojourner in his castle to be exposed to the ridicule of his retainers, he should undoubtedly imagine that the person who addressed him was sent to jeer him.

Felix was not of a quarrelsome temper, and contented himself with replying, very coolly, "It being doubtless the case that you, Sir Knight, have not been blessed with the advantage of a youth spent at that modern Parnassus, Alcala de Henares, nor of a mature manhood enjoyed at that first stage on the road to heaven, Madrid, it will be necessary to convey my commission in a somewhat more mundane manner, with Bœotian bluntness, rather than Aonian aptness, more terrestrially terse, than celestially seasoned."

While preparing to deliver his message in a “ more mundane manner,” as he termed it, Meneses hastened to dispel the ill humour which the idea of impertinence had gathered upon Vargas’s brow, by making him, in a few words, acquainted with both the person and character of the young Cavallero. “ Don Bartolomé, this gentleman is Don Felix Davila, the nephew of your host, the pride of poets, the friend of Lope, and the delight of the Court : he speaks you fairly, and means honourably.”

“ Your courtesy bespeaks you courtly, Don Diego,” said Felix : “ truly it were delightful to be the delight of that Court,

‘ Which but that it might be, Iberia was ;
‘ So is’t the parent, not the child, of her,
‘ That bears it on her treasure-yielding bosom :’

but prythee, good muse, let me drop

on the earth for a while, lest both I and these gentlemen lose the dinner prepared for our bodies, while you but regale our minds with unsubstantial sweetmeats. I do assure you, sirs, that if I were vain, I might have warranty to believe that the muse loved me well, she so besets me with her company."

"It is notorious that she has a good taste, sir," said Meneses, "and a devouring appetite to swallow up the minds of ready witted men."

"I trust, gentlemen, that you have an equally devouring appetite for savoury viands, which I take it are now ready dressed. I bear a message to you, Don Bartolomé, such being, as I understand, your appellation, conveying simply, in unpoetical civility, the greetings of my good uncle, the

Count of Alange, and offering all that honour, hospitality, and good will, can dictate in your present emergency."

Vargas had by this time entered in some degree into the character of Don Felix, and he now replied courteously and gratefully; adding, moreover, that the most immediate service which he should require at the hands of the Count was a portion of his olla, for that his stomach gave evident indications of his returning health. Having promised to supply him with this, the poet retired, taking Meneses along with him.

When Felix and Meneses arrived at the great hall where the repast was spread, they found that the punctual stomach of the Conde had not been influenced by his courtesy, but that the meal had actually commenced.

The Count was placed at a round table, and father Cachafuto at some distance from him, in an indefinite situation, neither opposite to him nor at his side, having taken an angular position, leaving, at the same time, sufficient space for the two Cavalleros to place themselves on the right and left of the Count, which they accordingly did. The table displayed the first course only, consisting of a large and melting melon, considerable slices of which were gliding down the throats of the Conde and the friar; a flat but extensive bowl contained lettuce leaves, fennel, and green herbs, in great abundance, swimming in water, the surface of which was variegated with circular islands of oil, that floating about, sometimes met and formed continents; these were in their turn rebroken into islands, by

the obtruding stumps of the salad which they chanced to meet with in their navigation : besides this a large earthen dish was the depository of a *sandia*, or water melon, which being cut in halves displayed its black stones to the view.

While the master and his chaplain were gulping down melon at the larger table, the Alferez and the escudero were following their example at a smaller one, not far removed from that from which they received their viands ; and the whole of the retainers and servants of the house were crowding and hustling each other at the door of the apartment ; some were thrusting their way over the threshold, while all were eagerly watching the progress of the several morsels from the parent melon to the destroying cavity in which they were lost to their

view ; and the prospect produced almost the same salivating effects upon them, which the actual enjoyment did upon the eaters. The cup-bearer, whose duty it was also to carve and distribute the viands, stood near with his knife in preparation ; and the herald, who appeared with the two cavaleros, took his usual post at the door, to prevent the intrusion of the hungry expectants without.

“ I tarried not for you, gentlemen,” said the Count, “ for, according to the old saying, a hungry man will find his mouth in the dark, and so I hold that a man who wants his dinner should find his way to the hall in time : as for you, nephew, they say that poets live upon sighs ; if that be true, I have no excuse to make to you, for you have laid in such a stock since your arrival at Alange, that it ought to keep you

hunger-free for a whole year, be you ever so great a gormandiser."

The gentlemen did not waste much time in apologies, but took their places, and Felix represented the cravings of the sick man's stomach, and his promise to send something forthwith to satisfy them. The medical chaplain, or ecclesiastical physician, interposed to prevent such viands being administered to his patient, as those which were then displayed upon the board; and he interlarded his protest with such powerful attacks upon the green leaves which occupied the oil-islanded lake before described, as seemed to proceed from his intention of avoiding the danger by removing the temptation.

The appearance of the more solid part of the repast, through an archway which alone separated the hall

from the kitchen, operated considerably in confirmation of the friar's opinion, that a platter of olla with its corresponding sausage, and morsel of ham, would more effectually recruit the invalid's strength than the luscious liquid of the melon, or that watery combination called a sallad. The remains of these two dishes, which were still considerable, were delivered over to the eager and tumultuous crowd at the door, where their total demolition was unceremoniously and almost instantaneously effected. The sandia kept its place as a standing dish; and being cut into small morsels, which were occasionally put into the mouth, served to satisfy the thirst with its dissolving and delicious coolness.

The dishes which were substituted for those that had been removed, consisted of a large olla, or a very excellent

collection of all sorts of vegetables, boiled together with a few sausages, a piece of bacon, and a piece of mutton. These three ingredients, however, sat upon the top of the mess, and appeared in size in the proportion of so many trees upon the ridge of a high hill. The second dish was very small, and presented four or five little birds, of what particular species it is quite impossible to determine, since all sorts of little birds, from a sparrow to a partridge, are considered good eating in Spain; these were richly ragouted in oil. A third dish followed, in which large queen's olives, as they called them, were piled up, emulating in height the very crest of the sausage-crowned olla.

While the change of courses was taking place, the cup-bearer produced a bottle from which he only

half filled a small silver goblet that at the most could have held little more than a quarter of a pint. He presented this to his master, who, putting it to his lips, did not swallow much more than half the quantity it contained ; but that he did with satisfaction, exclaiming, as the goblet passed to Meneses, “ It is right good Paxarete, Señor, as ever was pressed from Andalusian grape.” Meneses drank as sparingly as had his host, and Don Felix scarcely tasted that which had been poured into the goblet for him. Indeed, so little had he lessened the quantity, that the cup-bearer maliciously, and with half a smile, handed the cup immediately to father Cachafuto, without attempting to replenish it, as he had done to the others.

The Spaniards were proverbially temperate in the use of wine in those

days, and I must do them the justice to add, comparatively so in these. With their hills and their valleys flowing with the juice of the grape, even as their springs with water, yet it was most rare that it happened, even to a peasant, to follow the example of the first cultivator of the vine. A glass of good wine after the cold fruits with which they began their repast, and at the close of it another, or perhaps two, was the extreme point of indulgence amongst the upper class, and a proportionate increase in quantity, according to the weaker power of the common Catalan tinto, bounded the libations of the lower. It was jokingly allowed, and had become proverbial, that the quantum for the clergy exceeded this ; and I have always found so much truth at the bottom of these Spanish proverbs, that I consider them

as of high authority. Father Cachafuto was certainly an instance of this. He never exceeded, indeed, but he always relished what he did drink ; and it never happened to the cup-bearer to find any dregs when the goblet came from the friar's hands.

Upon the present occasion the malice of the cup-bearer's neglect was matched against the ingenuity of the friar's wit, and the odds were great against its success. Good unadulterated wine was familiarly termed moorish, *Vino Moro*, which appellation it had acquired, to indicate that it had not been *christened*. With reference to this popular phrase, Cachafuto gravely addressed the last drinker—

“ It is as easy to see that you are an old christian as that this is infidel wine, good Señor.”

“ The infidelity of all wine is proverbial, father,” replied Felix.

“ ‘ The cheating grape, that makes the mind to laugh,

“ Striving to cumber it with empty thoughts,

“ That it may pick its pocket of good sense.’

but how seest thou the antiquity of my faith ? ”

“ Marry, my son, in that, like a true believer of the olden time, thou leavest the moor to vengeance of Holy Church. By the blessing of Santiago, and in his holy name, now will I consume this infidel, even as he most wonderfully consumed, and, as it were, swallowed up, more than seventy thousand infidels in the eternally glorious and supremely miraculous battle of Albeyda with the light of his countenance, so shall the light of mine dry

up this unbaptised fountain. Here, Señor cupbearer, let the saint's name have an enemy to vanquish befitting the glory of his former victory."

"Though not quite so miraculous," said the cupbearer, smiling, as he filled the extended goblet to the brim.

Don Felix looked at the jolly round face of the friar, and then at the escutcheon of the order of Santiago, which hung prominently at the end of the hall, "*Rubet ensis sanguine Arabum*," said he, reading its motto, and again looking at the light of Cachafuto's countenance, which was producing its promised effect upon the infidel potation.

"Which, by interpretation," said the Count, who, being right learned in the canons and chronicles of his order, was happy at the opportunity of

displaying his information, "mean-eth"—

"May I crave pardon for deferring the illustration of the meaning of that right honourable badge, Señor," said Felix, interrupting him, "until some progress shall have been made towards satisfying the hunger of your wounded guest?"

The Count reluctantly laid by his learning, and acquiescing in the propriety of dispatching a portion of the good cheer to Vargas, the cup-bearer was desired to prepare a platter for that purpose. While he was doing this, Don Felix remarked that, "meaning no discourtesy to his uncle's establishment, if he had not known that he was at Alange, he might be forgiven for imagining that he had arrived at a frequented Venta on a well travelled

road, from the unrestrained impatience of the aspirants to the remains of the meal."

The chattering, pushing, and gazing of the servants collected at the door of the hall, which the impotent remonstrances of the herald were insufficient to subdue, authorised the observation of Don Felix; and Cachafuto desisted for a moment from setting them that example which they were so anxious to follow, that he might reply to Don Felix, " Truly the knaves are huge eaters; they have no lack of appetite."

" But a lamentable lack of patience, good father," said Felix; " if they were not thy servitors, uncle, my desire to save the Cavallero from the near prospect of starvation would induce me to propose that the contents

of that platter be enclosed in a *guardacena*."

A *guardacena* was an article with which all persons who were accustomed to travel were provided, and the necessity for which had grown out of the bad arrangement of the inns in Spain. The Spanish innkeeper thought he did quite enough in cooking the viands which were commanded; they were afterwards served up by the domestics of those who were rich enough to travel with such appendages, while the lower order of travellers occupied the kitchen at the time of meals, and served themselves. The latter class generally consisted of muleteers, and other itinerant merchants, who, as they always went about the country in parties, frequently filled the kitchen; and, as all acted upon the

laudable principle of every man for himself, there often prevailed a confusion and scramble which was greater or less according to the appetites or impudence of the parties. A gentleman traveller, or parlour guest, as an English landlord would call him, must have stood very little chance of receiving his dinner safe from the crowd of cormorants which intercepted its passage from the spit and the boiler, as many an unceremonious hand was ready to claw off a portion in its progress. The enormity of this evil gave rise to the invention of the guardacena, which was a mettle dish with a close cover fitted to it, and secured by a padlock. By means of this convenient dish the guest was sure to receive whatever the cook might have intended for him; and to make assurance double sure the guardacena

was most commonly dispatched by one servant, and the key by another.

Felix's proposal in the present case was made half in jest and half in earnest, and he was a little surprised at the Count's adopting it. The good old Conde had himself some fears as to the safe conveyance of the olla, which perhaps prevented his taking offence at the charge of want of discipline in his military household. But he was more especially moved to take the hint, by the remembrance that he possessed a very handsome guardacena having the arms of Velada and Alange quartered upon a shield carved upon it, on one side, and those of the most excellent and honourable order of Santiago of the sword, on the other. The use of silver as a luxury was only at that time becoming common. The increased quantity of that metal,

which the discovery of the new world had thrown into Spain, had considerably extended the circle of society in which a display of this kind was attempted to be made; and although the Count's rank and intercourse with the rich had rendered him familiar to the sight of plate, yet he was not above the pride of showing that he possessed luxuries which were not generally attainable. The guardacena was accordingly produced, and having received a portion of olla, with its accompaniments, it was delivered to one of the idle expectants with directions to convey it to Vargas, together with assurances of the speedy arrival of the key. The fellow made all possible dispatch in executing his commission, and having laid a large napkin over the invalid's bed, and deposited the imprisoned olla, he re-

turned with the speed of the hound who has caught the scent of his prey.

To prevent collusion between the messengers, the second was not dispatched until the return of the first. The bearer of the key then set forth, but with a heavy heart, for the diminished motion of the masters' jaws had already betokened occupation for those of the servants: he could hardly hope to cross the whole building and return before the more substantial course should come forth from the hall, and he knew the rapid demolition which awaited it too well to believe that a late share would be a good one. He had just turned from the patio, or quadrangle, on to the rampart walk of the white moor, when he heard the Babel confusion of voices, which usually attended the scrambling division of the meal. The effect of

this sound upon the key bearer was to make him execute in earnest, what his disappointment had made him contemplate only in spite. He was about to utter, "now could I find in my heart to send this key over the ramparts that it may travel the way which the christian prisoners were dispatched by the bloody Moor—" and here the voices of his comrades gave a sudden impulse to his arm, in unison with that which he had threatened; the action followed the thought, and off flew the key to find its way into the valley, while the key bearer made almost equal haste to find his way to the half eaten olla.

In the mean time Vargas, who felt hunger almost to sickness, waited in expectation of receiving the means of opening the provoking guardacena. Having outwaited his patience,

in a fretful fit of anger he examined the lock by which the cover was secured, and he found to his great satisfaction that time and rust had so injured it, that, although the key had turned, it had not executed its office, and that the olla had been all the while as free of access as if the guardacena had neither been furnished with cover nor padlock.

CHAPTER XII.

Back to thy hell !

Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel ;
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know ;
What I have done is done ; I bear within
A torture which would nothing gain from thine.

Manfred.

HAVING satisfied the cravings of his appetite, which had already begun to produce a sickening effect upon him, Vargas in vain endeavoured to pass the hour of the siesta in sleep. The sun had mounted high in the heavens ; its rays descending almost vertically, had driven every human being into the shelter of his chamber, and sleep sat on the exhausted lids of the Conde de Alange and his family. But every faculty of Vargas's mind was too busily

at work to allow the approach even of drowsiness. His imagination ran loose and wantonly over all the horrors that ever were conceived in the mind of an Inquisitor, or acted in his hall of torture. The dear object which constantly appeared to his fancy as the victim of these satanic inventions presently carried his thoughts into another and scarcely a less painful train. When his heart swelled with indignation at the idea that the fury of the Inquisition was impending over his beloved wife, the shudder with which he contemplated, as such, her who had drawn her life from the same source as himself, overwhelmed every other sensation; he turned in his bed, and groaned in mental agony.

While he was endeavouring to divert his mind from the contemplation of her irremediable miseries, that he might

devise some means of relieving the unhappy Cornelia in the labyrinth of dangers which surrounded her, his attention was arrested by a faint groan that caught his ear, which, in a short time, was repeated, and accompanied by low and inarticulate exclamations. The chamber in which Vargas lay occupied the whole interior of a square tower erected at the end of the white moor in its western angle. The entrance to it was by an external flight of steps, rising from the quadrangle of the new building, and the air was principally admitted to it through a mâchicoulis; * the light found its way in from the top of the projecting

* A mâchicoulis in ancient fortification was a window so constructed as to enable the besieged to cast down boiling water, &c. upon the heads of the assailants, without being exposed to their missiles.

screen of this opening, where a sufficient space was left uncovered to prevent the chamber from being dark. It must be remembered that the Count of Alange had designed his new building in just keeping with his old one; there was, therefore, a necessity for this Moorish defence; for although the tower stood upon the very brink of the perpendicular side of the rock, and indeed almost overhung it, yet there existed at the depth of about four or five yards from the top of the precipice, a small ledge, which nothing but the undaunted mind of a Roman could have thought of making into a path, and nothing but the suspicious mind of a Moor could have thought it necessary to defend. This ledge began a few yards beyond the fortress, and passing by it in a gradual descent, terminated in no apparent object at the

craggy end of the rock, at about its midheight. Its actual breadth might perhaps have been three feet, but its situation, jutting out from an enormous bare rock, and from which it sometimes even sloped, gave it the appearance of a thread from above, and rendered it untraceable from below.

It was apparently to defend the castle from any treacherous attack by such a perilous path as this, that Vargas's chamber had been machicolated : the opening of the mâchicoulis was immediately over it, and by this means Vargas sought to discover from whence issued the groans, the frequent repetition of which had drawn him from his bed, in spite of the pain that the exertion occasioned to his side.

His surprise was only equalled by

his apprehensions for the object which struck his sight. He saw a man in a monk's habit crawling in a downward direction along this path upon his bare hands and knees, having rolled his frock round his body, and turned up the drawers which he wore under them, to expose his very flesh to the contact of the rough and frequently pointed stones with which the way was paved. His head was defended by neither coif nor cowl, and the crown of it was perfectly bare,—a narrow rim of hair alone encircling it. As the sun had now commenced his descent, and shone full upon the flat side of the rock, its rays must have poured upon his undefended scull with a power which Vargas would have considered intolerable; and which, indeed, by suggesting the idea of its ordinary effect upon the brain, seemed to afford the

only probable solution of the insanity of his action. He actually left a track of blood, which dropped from the lacerations of his hands and knees.

Vargas's first impulse was to call out to the unhappy man, but his early education having made him familiar with the severe penances which the sincerer bigots of his original religion very frequently imposed upon themselves, he had no doubt but that this was a devout man in the act of self-punishment, and he cautiously avoided making the slightest noise, lest any sudden excitement might throw him off his guard, and he should be precipitated from the narrow shelf on which he was placed. The bare idea of such a catastrophe turned Vargas giddy, as the liliputian appearance of the objects below gave him a rapid estimate of the enormous height ; and, shutting

his eyes, he instinctively withdrew his head, feeling half the horrors of whirling with the rapidity of a cannon ball through such an expanse of air.

Having recovered in some degree from the terrifying effects of his first glance, he again looked down the *mâchicoulis* to observe the monk's progress. He cast his eyes forward in search of an object of termination, which the dauntless devotion of this monk might have in view, and he found, as he expected, that, at some distance down the path, a small crag projected from the precipice, at one corner of which the roots of rather a large bushy tree had wormed their way into a crevice of the rock, while its branches extended horizontally into the air. The crag afforded a tolerably even platform of five or six yards square, and here, at the very root of the forlorn tree, a

rough stone cross was erected surrounded by a number of pebbles.

“Can such a spot have ever been the scene of an assassination,” thought Vargas; “and yet, if it were possible to imagine any chain of circumstances by which deadly enemies could meet in such a situation, death sits there in a shape to please the most satanic hatred.”

While his imagination played with the horrid idea of a murder committed in such a way, the monk achieved his pilgrimage to the platform. Having attained this point he flung himself on his face, and seemed for some moments to be in the act of silent prayer; he then rose, and took a pebble from a pocket under his frock, and adding it to the heap which already encircled the stone cross, he sat down to wipe the blood which flowed from his hands and

knees, and the big drops which stood upon his hairless head.

While thus occupied, he gazed upon the little heap of stones in silence; at length he began to soliloquise, at first in a low tone, but his voice rose by degrees, and his manner became more and more impassioned.

“What boots it that I should count them! What though they amounted to ages instead of years! Ages cannot wash it away. Half an eternity of purgatory, and a million of masses, were scarcely sufficient. *Ave Maria purissima*, Mary mother, open the treasury of sainted deeds! pour them out to cleanse my foulness.” Then taking his rosary, he commenced a rapid delivery of Aves, in which, however, he suddenly stopped, bursting out with—“Why makest thou a

cradle of that tree, thou foul demon ? Begone from me : by the holy beads that Mary gave to Dominic, I charge thee leave me ; with the sword of St. James will I fight thee, Satan — Ha ! tarriest thou ? ” He held up the beads with one hand, and grasped some of the stones with the other : — “ By the immaculate virgin but I will cast thee from thy eagle’s nest : here are stones to make thee a rosary of hell——”

He was about to cast the handful of stones at the imaginary demon in the tree, but the act of starting to his feet, and the exertion of withdrawing his arm for the purpose, nearly threw him from his balance, and he tottered at the very brink of the awful abyss. He held his head over, and looked down for a moment, without any appearance of fear ; and then hastily re-

placing the stones, he resumed his lying position, loudly vociferating, "Tempt me not, thou damned fiend; beckon me not;—if I follow thee, earth might stop my body, but my soul would fall a depth to which this leap were but as the gambol of a goat—even the depth of hell. Begone—begone—point me not the way—Satan, avaunt."

His vociferations became louder, and fell into a strain of blasphemous expressions and insane invocations. The paroxysm continued to increase until throwing off his frock, and taking his cord, he resolutely applied it to his back with a degree of force proportioned to the high state of excitement which he had produced in his mind. His cries now became piercing and frightful, and with a strange in-

consistency they seemed to stimulate him to redouble the flagellations which occasioned them.

Vargas, as he contemplated this spectacle, could not refrain from imagining that he beheld a real demoniac, a wretch literally possessed by the enemy of mankind. He called to mind a long controversy which he had formerly held in England with good master John Walker, to whom he had been much indebted for the purifying of his faith; and the sight of this man almost shook the foundation of the belief which the arguments of that learned preacher had produced in his mind,—that the human body was no longer allowed to be the prey and plaything of the devil. Amongst the regular clergy in Seville, he had seen many instances of great apparent severity in the application of self-im-

posed penance, but the secrets with which his education had made him acquainted had taught him to estimate them better than the persons on whom they were intended to impose : but he had never before witnessed any act of the kind which could excite no suspicion of deceit, and which, therefore, must have proceeded from a sincere belief of its efficacious influence over phrenzied feelings and powerful impulses to evil.

When the monk had exhausted himself, he ceased, laid himself down for a short time to recover, and then resumed his frock and cord without any apparent agitation. His whole appearance was now changed ; and Vargas might have conceived that if he had before been the sport of an actual devil, that he was suddenly dispossessed, for, sitting quietly down, he drew

from under his garments a small leathern bottle, which was suspended from his inner girdle. This he applied to his mouth, and deliberately swallowed a considerable portion of its contents, which, as Vargas shrewdly imagined, were neither of water nor of medicine, but good old dry sherry, coming very probably from the cellars of the Conde. Having refreshed himself, he adjusted the knees of his drawers and his frock, with a calmness strikingly contrasted with the agitation of the past scene; and throwing his hood over his head, he commenced his return up the pathway in a posture more becoming the gravity of a monk and the dignity of a man than that in which he had descended.

As with a firm and regular step, and looking steadily at his path, he

passed under the opening through which Vargas was observing him ; the latter involuntarily ejaculated “ the Lord have mercy upon thee ! ” The monk stopped, but without taking his eye from the path until he had laid himself at length to guard against the imminent peril of looking upwards without support in such a situation. He then turned his face, and seeing Vargas, demanded “ Who art thou ? ”

“ An humble and edified spectator of your sanctifying devotions, holy father,” replied Vargas.

“ Say rather a spectator of my frailty and of my temptation : thou hast beheld the scene of crime, and marked the consequences of it ; let it be a blazing beacon to warn thee from it. Fancy that yon fiend had burnt my body, and let the human pyre glow for ever in your thought, to stop

your hand when it is raised to shed blood. Thou hast seen these combats ; it is fitting that I should speak with thee ;—come to my cell at nightfall.”

“ I am a wounded man, father, and I fear that my strength will scarce serve me for the task,” replied Vargas.

“ Thou too wouldst have shed blood, and the black fountain of thine own was made to flow, so is it ever with that wretched animal man,—he hates,—he stabs,—and is stabbed. Seek me when thou canst, for thy soul’s sake ; albeit, the devil will seek thy soul for destruction long ere thou seekest me for salvation.” Saying these words he carefully got upon his feet, and resumed his progress upward.

While Vargas was watching his ascent, and revolving in his mind the controversy respecting the demoniacs

which had been so forcibly recalled to it, he heard the door of his chamber open, and upon turning round he found that father Cachafuto had entered. With an expression of great compassion the good friar assisted Vargas to regain his bed, giving him the support which the pain of his wound rendered very acceptable.

“ My poor son,” said he, “ thou art doubtless exhausted : I heartily grieve for thee ; but console thyself, my son ; thy abstinence, however inconvenient, will be of excellent service in assuaging the boiling of thy blood, which, perchance, might otherwise have boiled over, and caused thy death ;—so fearful is a fever unchecked by a wholesome fast.”

The friar waited for a reply ; but Vargas, who had not felt any pain while his mind had been strongly acted

upon, now suffered very much from having in his exertion displaced the bandages round his side. He was, besides, in no humour to encourage Cachafuto's medicinal loquacity, an indulgence in which this exordium seemed to portend; he therefore remained silent, and the friar continued:

“Thy patience is commendable, my son; hunger is wont to stimulate the choler and the tongues of some men; marry I have myself felt its influence upon the latter, though, praised be the sword of St. James, the experience of frequent fasts as ordained by holy church, and inflicted, perchance, by our worthy prior, has given me good assurance that upon the former it has no power: still, my son, thy patience is commendable; thou hast doubtless besought right earnestly the

assistance of the saints, of thine own especial Saint may be ; and if it were Santiago de Compostella, why so much the better ; he could have supplied thee with viands at once ; but it was better to have given patience to thy mind than meat to thy mouth."

To enable the reader to do justice to Cachafuto's compassionate feelings, and to understand his consolatory harangue, it is necessary to inform him that the man who had thrown the key of the guardacena over the precipice, having satisfied his own appetite by securing his share of the olla, began to feel some compunction for having prevented poor Vargas from satisfying his.—What was to be done, however ? The Conde, the friar, and every member of the family were retired to rest. To disturb any of his masters was not to be thought of. He did indeed

make an attempt to remedy the mischief he had done, by begging the cook to supply him with something to carry to Vargas; but the cook was too well acquainted with the pilfering practices of the lower branches of the family, whom he emphatically called the kitchen kidnappers (be it said without disparagement to their honesty), to listen for a moment to such an improbable device as, what was really the truth, appeared to be. The man quieted his conscience by saying to himself, that at all events the olla was well covered, and would keep warm; and wrapping himself in his cloak, he snored his siesta in unison with his fellows.

On awaking, however, he began to feel a little uneasy at the results of a discovery which he thought he had better anticipate by a confes-

sion. To do this to the Count himself might be dangerous; the friar was a more suitable person, and to the friar he accordingly went: still, however, his conduct was likely to excite anger; and, after some consideration, he determined to declare his misdemeanor in the form of a solemn *confiteor*. Cachafuto was somewhat surprised at being called upon to administer the sacrament of penance at such an unwonted hour; but when he came to understand the nature of the offence, which demanded such immediate assistance, he commiserated poor Vargas so sincerely, that he hastened to conclude the ceremony, promising absolution to the sinner, but imposing a rigid fast of four-and-twenty hours as its condition.

As the sick man proffered no reply to the compassion of the priest, the

latter continued to soliloquise; and, while pouring forth his discourse, his eye-caught the guardacena, of which Vargas, in finishing his meal, had mechanically closed the cover. Cachafuto went up to it as he pronounced "I fear for some brief space thy stomach must still be exposed to the gnawing of nothingness; for Gil Quemacarne, the cook, is none of the quickest, more especially upon extraordinary additions to his diurnal duty:" so saying, he went to take up the guardacena by the cover, which, to his utter astonishment, gave easy way, and displayed the empty dish beneath it.

"Holy St. James!" exclaimed the friar, "How's this?—Had I supplicated for the mediation of Santiago, this noontide, I should have thought this his work."

Vargas, who had long acquired a

habit of abstraction, which the engrossing nature of his thoughts was calculated to produce, had been pondering on the scene he had witnessed ; and he now put a question to the friar, which resulted from his desire to know something of the austere monk ; but which Cachafuto took in a wrong point of view, making it to jump with his own train of thought.

“ Is not there another person of the holy profession resident in this castle besides yourself, father ? ”

Vargas's expression of voice was simply interrogative ; but to Cachafuto's ear it possessed a tone of reproof, that he had rested the possibility of the miracle upon *his* intercession alone ; and he exclaimed with a certain degree of pique which, however, was soon overcome by his natural good humour.

“ What ! Oh—Father Lawrence has

been here ; ey ?—how came he here ?—and he opened it for you ;—well ;—I'm glad of it ;—but how ?—he had not the key ; and it has not been broken :—Then 'twas Santiago ; who vouchsafed his interference to *his* prayers, and not to mine :—so much the better ;—so much the better ;—nobody can say but he is a holy man—a very holy man :—'tis fit I should be humble ;—I have never been bad enough to come to such holiness ;—father Lawrence is, of a surety, a holy man——”

“ Father Lawrence,” said Vargas, “ if that be his name, has not been here ; and it is indeed little less than a miracle that he is not at this moment dashed to atoms at the bottom of this valley, or drowned in the stream that flows through it.”

“ Oh ! I understand,” said Cachafuto ; the *cacoethes loquendi* over-

powering for a season the *cacoethes credendi* which had been excited by the titulating scent of a new miracle ; “ You have seen Father Laurence sanctify his siesta by a walk down the Saracen’s Scimitar ;—I told you he was a holy man ;—all the world call him a holy man.”

“ I do not deny his claim to the character, father,” said Vargas ; “ if his devotion were as well regulated as it is earnest, he would be indeed a holy man.—But what is the Saracen’s Scimitar you speak of ? ”

“ It is a heathen appellation, and were an abomination to a christian ear ; but that custom has christened it.—You are, I trust, unacquainted with the uncivilized rites of the hell-filling worship, which the blessed Apostle St. James appeared upon earth, with a flaming sword, and

mounted on a charger of the whiteness of light, for the sole purpose of extirpating from this much favoured and most Catholic Country: but I must instruct you that the sons of Satan, who practised these rites, and held this belief, wickedly but wittily pretended that the only road to Heaven lay along the sharpened edge of Scimitar, which formed a bridge over the fires of punishment. Now there is a pathway adown the flat side of this *land-wave*, as the peña of Alange hath been quaintly denominated, which, not offering safe footing for the traveller, yet provideth certain death for the tripper. The name, therefore, is not inapt; and, in reference to the Mahomedan road to Heaven, it is known by all our Estremenian peasants as the Saracen's Scimitar; to which name it has, moreover, a patronimical pre-

tension, having been originally used as footing for mortals, by those of the Saracenic scourge, who fortified Alange.”

“ There is an extraordinary and picturesque spot,” said Vargas, affording the friar a breathing space ; “ some fifty yards down which exhibits the sign of blood-spilling ? ”

“ Marry ! mention it not,” resumed Cachafuto ; “ and, above all, speak not of it to father Lawrence ; it is his business to be sure, and not for me to meddle with :—’tis said, however, that Satan hath power upon that spot, and that ever and anon he gives the holy father battle there.”

“ Methinks,” said Vargas, “ the bold monk is at some trouble to give fearful vantage ground to an enemy already somewhat too strong for most men :—but is there no legend touching

this death-cross? It would be a solitary memorial in Spain were there no tale of its planting, though it were only to supply an innkeeper's supper theme, or a muleteer's song."

"There are legends in plenty, my son, or rather there is a legend which is recited in various ways."

"Will you not let me hear it?"

"Father Lawrence can tell it more accurately than I can, my son," said Cachafuto, who seemed to have been suddenly cured of his loquacity.

"It was but now," returned Vargas, "that you advised me not to enter upon the subject with him."

"Truly it is a dangerous subject to enter upon; and thy curiosity, my son, is none of the wisest;" but as the good father's desire to communicate, was full as great as Vargas's desire to hear, the terrible story, he gave way

to the former while he seemed to indulge the latter; and merely to convince himself of the necessity for this disclosure, he added, "I like not to name these fearful passages, which indeed seemeth in some sort like an invocation of the devil who figureth therein; but I am strong in the strength of the blessed Santiago, and it is not fitting to cross and fret a sick and fevered man:" so saying, like a good Catholic soldier, he took hold of the rosary which hung from his cord, for the same purpose that a dragoon draws his sword when he ventures into a country occupied by the enemy, and with this defence in his hand he began his tale.

CHAPTER XIII.

What! headlong hurl'd into that dread abyss,
A depth too deep for life to fathom it;
And still the hero lives! The Gods, the Gods,
Propitious to Messenia, gave him wings
To render his descent a flight, not fall.

Aristomenes ; a Tragedy.

“ You have doubtless heard, my son,” said Cachafuto, “ that father Lawrence has inhabited this pinnacle of earth a quarter of a century to the full: now the cross of the Saracen’s scimitar was erected about the same period.”

“ From this coincidence of date, you would have me to infer, that the father was the perpetrator of a murder upon that spot,” said Vargas.

“ No, Señor, he committed no mur-

der," continued Cachafuto ; " he only willed one ; and the devil—(*Ave Maria purissima*, dropping a bead) the devil took the will for the deed."

" Even in the same manner as he is apt to consider our thinking of him an invocation with the thoughts, as much as our naming him is an invocation with the lips," said Vargas ; " but proceed."

Another bead fell from Cachafuto's hand, and a corresponding *Ave* from his mouth, as he said " the devil tempteth us unhappy mortals by thought, word, and deed, and unless we diligently seek the interference of the blessed Saints in Heaven, and more especially of the apostle Santiago, his victorious antagonist, we have little chance of escape from his temptations. Seeing that——"

“ But father Lawrence was tempted, as your Paternity was saying,” interrupted Vargas.

“ He was, my son, sorely tempted: —Santiago avert such temptation from us. Father Lawrence must have deeply sinned, and have fully understood the depth of his sinning, since his penitence obliged him to leave all the holy comforts, which, of a surety, are abounding at St. Justus amongst the brethren of St. Geronimo, and to change his snug cell in the valley of Plasencia, for the most miserable of all possible hermitages upon the most inaccessible part of the rock of Alange. You must see his chapel and ermita ; and, unless, perchance, you break your neck in getting there, you cannot but be struck with the contrast.”

“Then this monk,” said Vargas, “was of the fraternity amongst whom the great Emperor chose his retreat, and closed his eyes in this world.”

“Ay, my son, and opened them again in his passage to the next; for you must know that——”

Vargas had unconsciously opened a new and more interesting prospect to the loquacious propensity of the friar. The Emperor's death was a theme upon which he was most minutely informed, and loved most minutely to dwell. Vargas perceived that the further he went into the new subject, the more difficult it would be to draw him back to the old one, which was much more interesting to himself; and it was not without some patience that he succeeded in bringing father Lawrence and his temptations again

upon the stage of the friar's imagination.

“ Well, then, my son, as I was saying, the Emperor——”

“ Father Lawrence, so please you.”

“ True, true, father Lawrence, being a brother of St. Geronimo, obtains leave from his prior to make an excursion to Cadiz;—what was the pretext for this journey, I am not able to inform you; but it was afterwards known that he privately carried with him a young child from the neighbouring city of Plasencia. Alange stood in his way to Cadiz, and further than Alange he never went. Of his motives for tarrying upon this spot I am as ignorant as of the pretences for his journey:—but of what occurred here between him and the devil,” (and down dropped a bead) “ I have been

very credibly and particularly informed."

"Have you derived your information from either of the parties concerned, father?" asked Vargas, smiling.

"I am not in the habit of associating with either, my son," gravely returned the friar; and he took occasion to add two *Aves* to his counted rosary.

"At the time I speak of, the new castle of Alange, the white moor, as 'tis called, had not been erected, nor even imagined; and the place on which we now are was a fearful and rugged path, leading to the gate of the black moor, with nothing to save a poor wretch from falling (Santiago protect us!) down the dizzy depth yonder, that makes my head turn but to think on't. Here stood father Lawrence with the

poor babe in his arms, and nobody by to see ; but Satan was close at his elbow, (*Ave Maria purissima*,) and whispered to him that it would be a very good thing to send the child to heaven by the way of that precipice,—a terrible way truly ; but the ways to Heaven are seldom of the pleasantest.”

The interest which Vargas had at first felt now very much increased ; and he raised himself in his bed to listen to Cachafuto’s tale, while the number of beads that dropped on the good father’s rosary rapidly increased as he proceeded.

“ Father Lawrence did not resist the temptation, and the child fell from his hands——”

“ Over the precipice ? ” exclaimed Vargas.

“ Verily, over the precipice,” re-

plied the friar; “and presently there was such a shout of devils in the air, as might have been heard for leagues around, and which was heard at the Venta below :—Master Rock, the innkeeper at the new building, testifieth to the fact, he being then a serving lad in the old venta, which has been pulled down to make room for the new.”

“Hard hearted wretch!” ejaculated Vargas.

“It has been the hardness of his heart,” replied the friar, “that has had the principal influence in procuring him the name by which he is now commonly known, and by which I have just designated him.”

Vargas, who sought in vain to discover any analogy between the name Lawrence and hardness of heart, asked to what name he alluded.

“ Master Rock,——he is, you know, the Ventero of the peña or rock.”

“ Pshaw!” said Vargas, impatiently; “ what of the monk and the child ? ”

“ Patience, my son, patience ; you shall hear all in time. Satan, it appears, had counted without his host—a proverbialism this, by the way, which I ought not to have chosen, seeing that the infernal shout which Master Rock avouches to have heard sufficiently proves that Satan, at that time, had his host with him.”

Vargas, who was really interested, could not bear the facility with which the friar’s mind was turned out of its path by every new thought that crossed it ; he impatiently desired him to keep straight forward in his tale.

“ I am looking for a better mode of expression, my son. Satan was disap-

pointed—that will do—he was indeed disappointed, for behold, San Cachafuto, riding upon an eagle, receives the child as it falls, and perches with it upon the tree which you have observed: there he leaves the babe as in a nest, and takes his flight into heaven.”

Vargas had expected something more credible at least than this, and he was sadly disappointed at the miraculous preservation of the child; he could not help exclaiming, “What wretched nonsense is this! if there be any truth at all in the story, why encumber it with such absurdities?”

The friar was at first about to reply in anger; but, after a moment’s consideration, he preferred argument, and in a tone of expostulation he said, “Do you doubt the possibility of this interference?—I trust not; but if your

faith wants confirmation, only reflect upon the miraculous interference of a greater saint, indeed, and in a greater cause, but in a very similar manner. Remember, my son, that the great Santiago appeared in the air at the battle of Albayda, riding upon a horse white as the colour of light. What has been done can be done again; and without disparaging the blessed apostle, why should not the lesser saint Cachafuto use the same interference to save one Spaniard, which the greater St. James employed to save thousands?"

In real truth the friar's conscience secretly whispered to him that Vargas's incredulity applied not to the manner of the miracle but to the worker of it. The fact was, that when Cachafuto came to Alange, and found a well-attested miracle unclaim-

ed by any canonised inhabitant of heaven, and straying like a lost dog in search of his master, he thought he was doing a good action in appropriating it to his patron saint, whose lack of popular miracles had often been a subject of concern to him. He therefore attributed it at once to San Cachafuto, secretly excited by the same charitable feelings which induce many pious persons in Spain to order masses to be said for the benefit of the most unprayed-for soul in purgatory.*

Cachafuto continued his defence of the doctrine of miraculous interference

* Philip IV ordered by his will that 100,000 masses should be said for his soul, with a proviso that if a less number should prove sufficient to procure its release from purgatory, that the over-plus should be for the benefit of *el alma mas sola*, the most unprayed-for soul that he might leave behind him there.

in general, and his proof of the particular instance of it which he had recorded ; while Vargas, who had grown ashamed of having paid any attention at all to his story, resigned himself in silence to the friar's fluency upon a subject so interesting to himself. As Cachafuto mistook this for conviction, he soon talked himself into thorough good humour. His harangue was at length interrupted by the entrance of Meneses, who, having allowed himself a short siesta in preparation for a long journey, had, at an early hour in the afternoon, gone himself to the Venta to see that his mule was prepared. Anticipating such a visit, Master Rock had set all his ingenuity to work to escape the consequences of the non-appearance of the beautiful beast, in search of which he had dispatched all the assistants he could muster, none

of whom had yet returned. Master Rock, after many endeavours at roguery, was forced to see that in this case honesty was the best policy, at least as far as a confession of the mule's absence was opposed to the chance of making the new mule act its part. He therefore declared to Meneses that the high-fed animal, upon finding itself free, had set off at a pace which left all the pursuers far behind ; and that although three villagers had by his direction gone after it, neither mule nor men had since been heard of.

Meneses was not in a state of mind to investigate the truth of this story very minutely ; he was, indeed, vexed, but he contented himself with charging the innkeeper to take every possible care of the animal upon its arrival, and to keep it until he should

claim it; while he would make use of the best that Master Rock could procure for him in the mean time. Having arranged this matter, he hastened to take leave of Vargas.

His appearance was a great relief to the invalid, who had been fretted into a fever by the friar's prosing theology. He now made no scruple of requesting to be left alone with Meneses, to which Cachafuto rather sullenly assented; and taking the guardacena with him, he went, he said, to chide the cook for his delay in preparing the olla; and to publish, as was fitting, the miraculous manner in which it had been rendered unnecessary.

"I trust, Señor," said Meneses, "that your wound is of no account, and does not make you suffer much pain."

"The pain which I suffer is from a

deeper and a more deadly wound; your sword has but let me blood. I entreat you to tell me what plan can be devised for the relief of Doña Cornelia."

"If I were to explain to you all the schemes which my anxiety has suggested," said Meneses, "their very perplexity would prove how little chance of success there is from any. But that which appears the most feasible, rests upon such uncertain grounds that it will scarcely afford hope enough to salve the wound you speak of. I do, however, see a light through the darkness that surrounds that unhappy lady; I do see a means by which, with the blessing of heaven, and the help of the saints, I can not only obtain access to, but egress from, the prison of the Inquisition."

"Dispatch is every thing," said Vargas; "there is not an hour to lose."

"I am fully aware of that," replied

Meneses ; “ and I set forth instantly. In the mean time you must remain here ; you cannot doubt but that you yourself are in danger from the Inquisition. In Seville you would be its victim ; and the late circumstances in which you have taken a part in Aragon should make you fear it every where ; your wound too requires care and quiet. The old Conde’s hospitality offers you an asylum, the situation of which renders it safe.”

“ If,” said Vargas, “ there were any possible means by which I could effect the great object for which alone I wish to live, neither my wound nor my safety should detain me here.”

“ Under the present circumstances,” replied Meneses, “ you can do nothing, and therefore remain where you are until you hear from me. Be fully assured that I will communicate with

you as soon as possible ; and that my communication shall be safely and cautiously sent. Depend upon my zeal ; it is secured by my desire to serve the Marquis de Bohorquia and his family : let me add, a new excitement to it."

Then taking off his sword, he continued, " With this sword my father's father fought the enemies of the Catholic religion and the Catholic country, under the Great Captain at Grenada and at Naples ; with this sword my father defended the same cause, by the side of Alva in France, and in Flanders : in the hands of their descendant it has done nothing but defend his own honour and his life, whenever either has been in danger. Let the blood which it has just shed serve to cement the friendship that should exist between us, and let us change our swords in token of its sincerity."

Vargas immediately reached his sword, which was standing beside the bed ; and, kissing the cross of it, he handed it to Meneses ; who, placing it to his lips as he received it, presented his own to Vargas. The age of chivalry was over, and the chivalrous feeling which had gradually dwindled from the reigns of Alphonso the Wise, and John of Aragon, through those of Ferdinand the Catholic, and Charles, was almost extinct in that of Philip ; a shadow of it was indeed kept alive in the warm imaginations of the youth of Spain, through the forced medium of romance, until Cervantes appeared to banish it altogether, by the power of common sense armed with the arrows of wit. At the time when Vargas and Meneses met, however, the knight of La Mancha was born only to the imagination of his unfortunate

author, and the power of chivalry had still a perceptible effect upon the society of the country in which it had so long held its court. The frequency of such sudden vows of friendship, after hostile rencounters, was one of the lingering remains of its ancient reign: and the devotion with which such vows were kept, proved at once the high sense of honour and the sincerity of these knightly young men. The token which passed between Vargas and Meneses was the common sign of such conciliating ties.

Meneses lost no time in setting forth on his solitary journey. He was one of those high spirited cavalleros of whom Lope and Calderon have given so many portraits, who make the point of honour the strict rule of conduct, deriving its principal zest from the scenes of intrigue and danger into

which it most frequently leads them. The situation of Meneses was one calculated to excite enough melancholy interest thoroughly to engage his mind, while his individual part in the unfortunate events was not so great as to overwhelm him. The dangers and difficulties which presented themselves might indeed be considered appalling, but they only served to raise his chivalrous courage and romantic imagination to a point necessary for acting with energy in such pressing circumstances.

The history of his connexion with these disasters was briefly this. During the later period of Vargas's residence at Seville, the Marquis had determined to marry his daughter; and as the arrangement of such matters rested, according to the custom of the age and country, entirely in his hands,

he pitched upon the son of one of his early friends—a gentleman of Valencia, an *old Christian*, and of *blue blood*. A correspondence had in consequence taken place, but he was not in the humour to communicate its nature to his daughter, and it was a very few days after the final arrangement of the marriage contract that the flight of Vargas and the disappearance of Cornelia took place. The deserted and unhappy father immediately dispatched intelligence of his misfortune to the affianced husband, upon whose honour the outrage was as great as if he had been actually married. Don Diego flew to Seville, and was unwearied in his endeavours to trace the fugitives; in the absence of any clearer indication to guide his search, he seized upon some vague intelligence which carried him to Alange, in returning from

whence, disappointed at the ill success of his expedition, he fell in with Vargas, as has been already detailed.

Vargas's narrative would have rendered Meneses his deadly enemy, if they had been rivals in affection ; but as this was not the case, the honour of the contracted husband was satisfied that that of the lady had remained secure. Her marriage with Vargas, particularly as it had taken place before that with Meneses had been proposed, being an insurmountable obstacle to the performance of his contract, in the true spirit of chivalry, he construed the law of honour into an obligation to assist and defend the lady, and upon this new course of action he entered heart and hand.

Having discovered from Vargas's narrative, that he was ignorant of the alliance which the Marquis had medi-

tated, he had the prudence and delicacy to conceal it, being sufficiently acquainted with human nature to know that under all the afflicting and revolting circumstances of his affection it was still susceptible of jealousy, —an aggravation of misery which he would not wantonly have inflicted.

With these thoughts and feelings Meneses shortened his road to Seville by pondering on his disinterested plans for the preservation of Cornelia.

CHAPTER XIV.

————— for he, even he,
Hath set upon this worm his wanton foot.
Scuthey.

WHILE Meneses is making the best of his way to Seville, the reader shall get there before him, and be admitted into the recesses of the palace of the Inquisition, by means of the powerful master-key of an historian.

When that same master-key last took him there, it was along with the unfortunate Cornelia, and he came out of that castle of despair in the company of the pitying Perico, whose compassionate feelings had procured him a translation to Zaragoza. But Cornelia was left behind; the unhappy lady had been conveyed to a small

room neatly arranged, but having its windows very strongly barred : here she had been laid upon a bed, and left alone.

The women of Spain have ever been characterised by a manliness and energy when placed in trying circumstances, by a loftiness of spirit and heroism which has enrolled many female names upon the pages of their history, from that which records the siege of Numantia down even to that whereon the siege of Zaragoza has been so recently written ; while the minuter memorials of biography afford them a proportionate increase of glory. Cornelia had been overcome by the softer emotions of her soul ; violence and outrage had a counteracting effect, and roused all the energy and spirit of her mind. While she continued to think of Vargas, she wept tears of the bit-

terest agony ; but when she was sufficiently recovered to comprehend the danger of her situation, her tears ceased, and her spirit rose with the perils that encompassed her. Her prison was a high chamber in the principal tower of the old fortress, being one of a range of rooms generally appropriated to prisoners against whom it was not intended to use rigorous measures. From the window the view extended over the Guadalquivir and the city, and a glance was sufficient to inform her where she was confined.

Upon perceiving that she was in the palace of the Inquisition, she immediately concluded that her religious opinions had become known ; she knew that Vargas had been with the Archbishop, and she naturally supposed that a confession of heresy to one of his bigoted principles had in-

duced him to take this step. Under this idea, the first suggestions of her ardent affection filled her mind with dread for the safety of her husband. His exclamation in the garden, however, came to her remembrance, and struck her with horror;—she strove to persuade herself that there was no meaning in his words, but the recollection of them haunted her: she endeavoured to banish the thought, and to that end she anxiously sought to devise some means of informing him and her father of her situation.

While she was thus occupied, the door was unbarred, and an officer of the tribunal entered bearing a wand, and followed by two alguazils. Without saying a word, they proceeded to uncover her arms and feet, in performing which they were respectful though silent. The beadle then led her from

the chamber, one of the alguazils going before, and the other following. After descending the tower and passing across the quadrangle of the building, they entered a suite of unfurnished apartments, in one of which, appearing like an anti-chamber to the superior hall, they stopped. The beadle went through a large door which opened from this anti-room. As it fell back to admit him, Cornelia cast a look of dismay into the seat of the tribunal of which she had heard and imagined so many horrors; feeling the necessity for courage, she prayed fervently for support in this trying moment, and prepared herself to appear when she might be called.

She waited not long; the beadle had only entered the hall of the Table of the Holy Office, made a very humble reverence, and immediately re-

turned. He then took Cornelia by the arm, and leading her to the door, he gently pushed her through, and shut it after her.

She found herself in a large stone hall, in the centre of which was placed a long table covered with black cloth ; at the upper end of this table sat an Inquisitor, and on his left hand a secretary, with writing materials. There was a person sitting almost behind the Inquisitor, and partly screened by him, in a large chair, with an Inquisitor's cap on his head, a mask on his face, and completely enveloped in a wrapping cloak. At the further end of the hall a very large crucifix was erected, reaching almost to the beams of the ceiling. The light was admitted from an opening in the roof, which was constructed in such a manner that the full glare of day fell upon the

countenance of the criminal at the lower end of the table, while the persons at the upper end were thrown into comparative shade.

In coming from her prison Cornelia had endeavoured by every exertion in her power to prepare herself for this moment ; but, in spite of all her courage, she felt her head giddy, and her feet fail her. There were a few moments of silence, which rather contributed to increase her confusion ; and still remaining close to the door, she was about to lean against it for support, when the Inquisitor said, “ *sit.*” This single monosyllable, though pronounced in a mild tone, had the effect of recalling Cornelia to herself. She raised her head—walked firmly up to the table, and said in a clear voice, “ No, Sirs,—I will stand—stand before this or any other tribunal in the world.”

The Inquisitor half smiled, and turned his head round for a moment to look at the person behind him. He then said, "You had better sit upon that stool which is placed there for your convenience."

Cornelia continued standing, and silent:—the Inquisitor went on:

"Whether you stand or sit, it matters not; place your right hand upon that book which is before you. Do you know what it is?"

Cornelia took it up, and having looked at it, said, with an undaunted voice, "It professes to be the gospel of eternal salvation:" and she bowed her head. The Inquisitor crossed himself, and said something in a low voice to the secretary, who wrote.

The Inquisitor then desired Cornelia to take an oath that she would speak the truth, and that she would

not reveal what might pass within those walls. She hesitated; but, after a moment's reflection, she took the oath required of her, and the Inquisitor began her examination.

“ It appears that you can read, and that you are acquainted with the Latin language ? ”

“ I can read,” replied Cornelia, “ but my knowledge of Latin is only sufficient to enable me to read the Scriptures.”

“ You have read the Scriptures then ? ”

“ I have.”

“ To whom are you indebted for the power of reading them ? ”

“ Under Providence to a gentleman formerly a student of theology at the Cathedral college.”

“ What is his name ? ”

“ Don Bartolomé Vargas.”

“ Is he a Catholic ? ”

Cornelia paused for an instant, but answered, “ He is.”

“ Do you know where you are ? ”

“ In the palace of the Inquisition.”

“ How do you know that ? ”

“ The situation of my prison made me acquainted with it.”

“ Do you know why you are brought here ? ”

“ I do not.”

“ Can you not imagine ? ”

“ I cannot.”

“ Does your conscience suggest no probable cause to you ? ”

“ None whatever.”

“ Remember that the Court of the Inquisition is lenient and forgiving to those who acknowledge their crimes, and endeavour to atone for them ;

while, on the contrary, it punishes with severity those who obstinately refuse to confess."

To this and to many such exhortations Cornelia uniformly replied that she had nothing to confess ; but they continued to urge her for more than an hour in the same manner, and apparently only for the purpose of exhausting her patience. This at length began to give way, and her answers grew sullen and even contemptuous. The person who sat behind the Inquisitor leaned forward, and whispered in his ear. The Inquisitor clapped his hands, and an alguazil appeared, who retired upon receiving some orders, and almost immediately afterwards the beadle entered the hall, and after making a low obeisance to the court, reconducted his prisoner to the anti-hall.

No sooner had the great door closed after the unhappy Cornelia, than, overpowered by the length and intensity of the exertion she had made, she burst into tears, and would have fallen, had not the beadle supported her, and placed her upon a wooden bench provided for the use of the alguazils in attendance. The men stood apart while she gave vent to the weight that oppressed her heart; but when they saw that she was in some degree recovered, the beadle approached, and, taking her by the arm, but still without uttering a word, he again led her forward.

He did not follow the same direction as that by which they had come; but, turning down a passage from one of the apartments, he conducted her into what seemed to be a private oratory, from the small altar, kneeling

desk, and missal, that it contained : and the whole was fitted up in a style of magnificence, the effect of which was stronger from the contrast which it displayed to the bare stone walls that she had passed through.

Here the beadle left her alone. She cast herself upon her knees, and earnestly raising her hands to heaven, she again indulged the feeling which produced another refreshing flow of tears. While she was fervently ejaculating a petition for mercy to the throne of grace, the door opened, and the Archbishop glided into the apartment, the motion of his feet not being perceptible within the roomy circle of his richly embroidered garment and low falling scapulary.

Cornelia did not know whether she was to expect a friend or a foe in the Archbishop. Her imprisonment had

followed Vargas's interview with him, and she naturally conceived that it had been the result of what had passed at that conference. It is true that the Archbishop had always shown much kindness towards her, which she had been accustomed to receive with gratitude and reverence ; but in his kindness there was something which had repelled her even in her earliest youth ; and now when many months had passed since she had seen him, and when during that period such important changes had occurred in her life, in her thoughts, and in her feelings, while she was uncertain in what light she was to look upon him, she could not repel a foreboding horror at his approach.

She cast an anxious and inquiring look at him, but neither moved nor spoke ; while he came up to her, and

taking her hand, gazed at her with what she endeavoured to persuade herself was meant for a look of compassion. She was convinced that she had not been mistaken, when, drawing a chair which stood near, he addressed her :

“ Poor child, poor child, what have they done to thee?—have they frightened the dear girl?—but I am come to bring you comfort.”

“ Oh ! most excellent sir, comfort is unknown here ; you must take me hence, if you would relieve me ; you must restore me to my father, if you would befriend me.”

“ I will befriend you, child ; I will relieve you : if you are reasonable, you shall go hence.”

“ If I go hence I may be reasonable ; but if I stay here I shall go mad.”

“ Patience, good daughter, and rise,—sit thee down, and let me talk to thee awhile.”

“ I will never rise till I rise to go hence. Holy father—great sir—if you have a touch of compassion in you ;—if you have a heart to feel,—if you are a Christian,—if you are a man, waste not one moment in talk, but use your vast power, your unbounded authority, to open these gates that I may pass.”

“ Verily, my child, I have a heart,” said the little Archbishop ; and in saying this there was an uncommon expression in his illegible countenance, and a strange intonation in his unmelodious voice, which attracted Cornelia’s attention in spite of herself. “ Verily I have a heart, my child ; and of a surety I am a man. Priests, good daughter, are men, frail men,

from the archbishop to the sacristan, sons of Adam all, and to be tempted." An unnatural hilarity accompanied this, almost amounting to a laugh, which appeared to Cornelia so inconsistent, that she looked up at him with wonder.

As Cornelia showed no signs of corresponding with this mirth, the Archbishop resumed his gravity and proceeded :

" I understand that you are accused of the dreadful crime of heresy ; " then, setting his little sharp eyes upon her, he continued :—" there be flames for heretics, child, corozas and san benitos." Cornelia shuddered, and covered her face with her hands. " Aye, and there be furnace and funnel, pulley and ropes for those who confess not."

Cornelia started, and hastily ejacu-

lated—"there are not such monsters upon earth as could inflict such diabolical inventions upon a weak, harmless woman."

"Not on a woman?" replied the Archbishop; "I tell thee, child, that 'tis scarce a week since one silly wench died at the pulley before the weights could be taken from her toes, and another bled to death from over racking,—all because the fools would not confess that they were followers of that delegate of the devil, Montanus."

The hardened mind of the old tormentor, blunted by the habit of seeing and hearing of such horrors, meant only to intimidate the unhappy creature before him; but he had no conception of the effect of such a recital upon a tender and delicate female to whom such atrocities were unimaginable. She grew deadly pale,

sickened at heart, and fell from her kneeling to a reclining posture, nearly fainting.

It is time to unravel the web of the loathsome spider before whom she was prostrated. He who was now Archbishop of Seville had early fallen into the hands of the most degraded of the degraded clergy at that unhappy period of the history of Christianity. All the bad passions of his bad heart had been fostered. Pride, ambition, sensuality, had found a hot-bed in his breast, and had brought forth fruit with a rapidity proportioned to the aptness of the soil, and the care taken in cultivating them. Too wise to be a bigot, he was wise enough to pass for one; and he made the livery of religion subservient to the gratification of all his passions. To trace his progress from the cell to the

stall would be but to recount a series of crimes ; until at length, abandoned by the long-suffering mercy of his Maker, and given over to penal obduracy and blindness of heart, he wallowed unreluctantly in wickedness, and lived upon crimes as his food. The bloated creature had fixed his evil eye upon the daughter of his friend the Marquis de Bohorquia.

He was, however, too well aware of the necessity for caution in so high and conspicuous a flight upon the wings of crime, to adventure any thing rashly ; and as his was a passion which was unmixed with one single spark of generosity, there was no danger of its being diminished by time, or relinquished from conscientious motives. It was an adhesive sort of desire, that blistered until it was gratified, but clung the faster the more it

festered. While with cool deliberation he had been forming plans for the attainment of his object, ambition crossed his path ; and as the lesser disease is overlooked when the greater approaches, the itching blister of desire gave way to the sharper goading of ambition. He went to Madrid ; a long period elapsed during which ambition held the sway ; but he left Madrid and ambition, and returned to Seville and Cornelia. She had formed the object of his contemplation and his plans on the journey, and the subject was a favourite scheme of villainy.

His conversation with Vargas had given him the alarm, and Vargas's inquiries had afforded him an excellent opportunity for no longer deferring the execution of his well digested plans. Upon these he had acted with-

out a moment's delay, and his object had hitherto been to give Cornelia a most complete estimate of the alternative which he was about to propose,—a private room in his palace, or the hall of torture in that of the Inquisition. With this view he continued to place before her a frightful picture indeed of the torments of the obstinate, and the pangs of the condemned. When he had sufficiently heightened the picture, and his victim lay before him on the earth, thoroughly overcome by the bare imagination of the horrors he described, he stooped down, and, taking the unresisting arm that lay weightily by her side, he said :

“ But from this I will save you,—if I can ; if you will let me. My friendship for your father urges me to this, but my feeling towards yourself commands it.”

She raised her head with a look of faint but sincere gratitude; he continued:—

“ My power here is not so great as you may imagine. I can do something, but not every thing. I cannot *release* a heretic, but I may be able to get myself appointed the warden of one. You shall have a room in *my* palace, instead of *this*, which is, in truth, a dismal place: You shall have an apartment, I say, next to my own, my child; and you shall be tended with every care that affection can conceive;—aye, affection, child, for I have already told you that priests are but men, and, being men, they are not absolutely exempt from human frailty:—I will absolve *thee*, child, though 'twill cost me sad penance to procure absolution for myself——”

Cornelia's pale cheek became

deep scarlet during the progress of this speech ; she started upon her feet, and, tearing her hand from him, recoiled backward, while her countenance expressed the greatest horror. The Archbishop looked at her for a moment with astonishment, and was about to speak, when she burst forth in the loudest tone of her voice :—

“ Hold——pollute not the air with one word more, thou livid mass of carrion corruption ; thou most execrable villain, every drop of whose blood carries a crime from thy heart to be hatched in thy brain.—Thou black load of deformity, dost thou not hear the thunder of the Almighty in thy ears speaking curses to thy conscience——?”

While her heavy imprecations found meet and powerful expression in that noble and greek-like language, and

rolled from her lips with an overwhelming rapidity, the Archbishop's cheeks became the colour of lead with rage, and seemed swelled to double their usual size. Cornelia cursed on until the words which pressed for utterance crowded too quickly to her throat, or appeared as if the weight of woe with which they were fraught demanded a larger passage for their vent. They seemed to choak her, and while she strove to send them forth, the thought flashed across her mind that she was in the Inquisition. "Helpless—hopeless"—with a convulsive, frightful sob, she exclaimed: "Heaven, have mercy on me;" and clasped her hands with energy.

The Archbishop, who had been incapacitated by the violence of his passion from moving, now made an effort to rise. Cornelia, terrified in the

highest degree by his movement, reeled backward giddily, and putting out her hand behind her sought for something to prevent her from falling. She had reached the end of the oratory, and arrived at the altar; her hand fell upon the crucifix: the moment she perceived this, she screamed out, "Sanctuary—sanctuary—praised be Providence!—sanctuary!"

The crucifix was a portable one; and, seizing it, she ran across the room towards the Archbishop, holding it out, and crying, "By this sacred sign, sanctuary!"

Fear overcame rage, and very likely saved his Excellency's life by preventing a fit of apoplexy. Cornelia's rapid advance alarmed him for his personal safety, and restored him to the power of action; he clapped his hands violently, and the door almost in-

stantly opened to admit the beadle and his alguazils. One motion with the hand of the Archbishop towards Cornelia, and another downwards, issued the order which her despairing scream could not avert. She was dragged from the chamber, and the shrill repetition of her piercing cry died away as she descended into the infernal regions of the Inquisition.

CHAPTER XV.

“ But, Sir, you have’nt told us how we are to get off here.

“ You could’nt get off kneeling, could you ? ”

“ Oh no, Sir, impossible ! ”

“ It would have a good effect, i’faith, if you could ; ‘ exeunt praying ! ’ ”

SHERIDAN’S CRITIC.

To any one who has read the horrible annals of that dread tribunal, the Inquisition, there is an overpowering feeling of dismay even in thinking upon it, and I do not scruple to avow, that I have experienced a very nervous trepidation during the time that my historical character has kept me within the palace at Seville ; and now with heartfelt pleasure I spread my goose-quill wing and take my flight to Alange ; but as the flight

is far, and the course has been quick, I will drop wing and draw breath at the venta, at the bottom of the rock, to plume my feathers which were somewhat ruffled in the palace of the Inquisition, and to prepare my pages for again carrying my readers to the White Moor.

I do not think that I have described the venta in so minute a manner as the importance of Master Rock's character seems to require; and, as a more perfect acquaintance with the building may tend considerably to elucidate an adventure which occurred there, I will proceed to introduce my readers into its inmost recesses. The venta of the Peña de Alange was more recently built, but not less rudely contrived, than the generality of solitary inns in the south of Spain. Its whole extent below was divided into

two compartments, the first a stable, and the second a kitchen ; and it was necessary to pass through the former to come to the latter. From the stable a broad ladder gave access to the upper story, which was divided lengthways, leaving a long gallery, fifty feet by fifteen, that, to an inexperienced eye, had the appearance of a dormitory in an hospital ; as it contained eighteen or twenty truck bedsteads, each being provided with a paillasse and a pillow, and each being surmounted by the effigy of a different saint ; for, in furnishing his venta, Master Rock had, with politic precaution, provided a saint for every sinner, and laid in so well-selected a stock, that each might sleep under the protection of his own. Over one bed St. Anthony the abbot petted his little pig ; over another St. Lawrence grilled on his gridiron ;

here stood a gigantic St. Christopher, and there rode a knightly Santiago, with something like a water-trough before his white horse, intended to represent his wonderful stone boat. The blessed Virgin figured under various forms, but always in her stiff embroidered petticoat and hideous hood. The corresponding half of the building's breadth was subdivided into a loft, or granary, and a very small apartment, the private nook of the master, the depository of his more important property, and the scene of the pig-skin purchase from the wine-selling muleteers.

The world had just placed the Peña of Alange beyond the reach of the rays of the midsummer sun, and its inhabitants were rejoicing that they were screened from his heat for a while, when a mule-litter turned out

of the public road, the persons it contained having made use of the last gleams of light to mark the approach to Master Rock's venta. A Spanish mule-litter is, of all things, the strangest and most unsafe for a conveyance, except, perhaps, one of the new opposition London coaches when it is loaded four inside and fourteen out, and whirling over ten miles in an hour. To form a Spanish mule-litter, take a fashionable vis-a-vis, dismount it, and place it between two scaffolding poles after the manner of a sedan-chair; let two great mules with their whole coats cropped so close as to be almost shaven, except long tufts at the ends of their tails, take the places of Irish chairmen, and you will have an exact picture of the vehicle, which, guided by the voice of a stout peasant, arrived at the door of the venta of

Alange. The persons who, strange to say, had arrived safely in this machine were, a lady having a noble air and manner, with her dueña, or protecting servant.

The lady seemed extremely fatigued, and asked whether she could have fitting accommodations for the night.

The obsequious master Rock was ready in assuring her that his accommodations were fitting for an empress; "Your Excellency has only to inquire of Don Juan of Austria, when your Excellency returns to the court; or, if he be dead, as they say, no great marvel if he should have recited to his most imperial brother, the magnanimous Don Philip, the style and manner of the entertainment which he received at the venta of Alange."

The host was proceeding to recount the history of Don Juan of Austria's

visit to the venta, but the dueña interposed to inquire for her mistress's bed.

“ Bed,” said master Rock, “ she shall have twenty beds ; show the way to the corridor of alcovas,” speaking to his imaginary household ; “ prepare the Señora Duquesa's bed ;” then turning to the strangers, he continued, “ as many beds as your Excellency pleases at the moderate charge of five reals a bed.”

“ Santa Jacinta,” said the dueña ; “ five reals ! we travel not with the treasury in our purses, friend, neither have we Cortes's mines in our carriage.”

“ By the sword of Santiago,” exclaimed master Rock, “ in making the charge I have bated three reals for the honour of housing a Duchess.”

“ How knowest thou that the Señora is a Duchess ?” said the dueña.

“ She has a ducal countenance, an honourable eye, and the very step of a title.”

The lady smiled as she achieved the task of reaching the top of the ladder, and was ushered into the dormitory by master Rock, while declaring her tokens of nobility.

“ Bless us all,” said she, “ here be beds for the Duke of Medina’s whole armada at Lisbon; art thou in the habit of housing a regiment, friend?”

“ The saints forbid,” replied master Rock, “ these beds never bore the burthen of dirt-descended serving men; they are only acquainted with the weight of blue blood;—upon which of these couches does your Excellency choose to recline? not a feather’s difference as to softness, nor

much as to sanctity, seeing each has a saint to assist the sleeper."

"It matters not which the Señora chooses to select, good master inn-keeper," said the dueña, "I will see to the preparing it, and of course all the others will remain unoccupied."

"At five reals each," replied master Rock, "making about six ducats."

"No such thing," cried the dueña, "thy tongue outrunneth thy tally; thou canst make no such count for the hire of a couple of beds; but this is morning's matter; leave my lady to repose, and thy light behind thee; we will discourse on this subject in settling thy bill:" and taking the light from his hand, she almost pushed master Rock out of the door, while he, nevertheless, signified his determination of maintaining his claim, by

saying, "an you pay not for all the beds, other travellers must sleep in them that will, if Heaven should send us any."

"So they be noble," rejoined the dueña, "for remember thou hast assured us that thy beds are specially kept for blue blood and noble names."

Master Rock descended intent upon securing the six ducats he had charged for his beds; how to extort them with any semblance of honesty was the point, and the fertile genius of the innkeeper soon found fair and feasible means of gaining his end. He left the kitchen at the disposal of the dueña, while she prepared her mistress's supper, and served it to the exhausted Señora, who had retired to one of the many couches of master Rock's corridor. In due time the meal was dispatched both by mistress

and maid ; and linen having been provided from their own litter, their eyelids and their senses gave way to the weight which had been placed on them by the exertions and heat of the day—they were both soon fast asleep.

Not so master Rock, who was never more awake nor more active than now : the result of his activity appeared about midnight, when fearful knocks were heard at the door of the venta.

“ *Ave Maria purissima !* ” loudly ejaculated the dueña, starting suddenly from sleep ; “ the Inquisition, the Inquisition ; ” and having fallen asleep with the rosary in her hand, and the *Ave* on her lips, the beads now rapidly dropped, being accompanied in their descent by beads equal in size, though not in consistency, which had suddenly and simulta-

neously arisen upon her affrighted brow.

A repetition of the knocking produced a similar effect upon the mistress, accompanied by a similar exclamation. "The saints protect us! Heaven have mercy!" said they alternately.

While they sat upright in their beds in silent anticipation of the result, master Rock's voice made itself heard as he mounted the ladder, exclaiming "This way, noble cavalleros, this way : there will be scarcely beds enough for all of you without displacing two Señoras, which I hold your characters for courtesy will secure them against : this way, gentlemen."

The alarm of the lady had been excited by more dangerous anticipations than those which might arise from having her rest disturbed by other tra-

vellers in whom she had no interest ; and it was a relief to find the evil less than she expected ; but still it was bad enough to have a host of men, whether gentle or simple, taking possession of the room in which she slept. She protested against this as master Rock ascended, followed by many heavy footsteps. Master Rock heard not her remonstrance, or replied not to it ; but, opening the door uncere- moniously, entered with a light in his hand, ushering in a number of persons, three of whom, habited like gentlemen, appeared in front, while several others remained behind them.

The introduction of the light so accompanied instantly threw both the females from their sitting posture, and made them take shelter under the bed-covering, head and all, from whence the lady demanded a parley, in which

she inveighed against the insolence and audacity of the innkeeper for introducing the strangers into her bed-room.

“ If you had chosen to pay for the beds, Señora, they should have been yours, and nobody should have disturbed you ; but as you declined so to do, how can I turn travellers from my door with unpaid beds inviting them to repose in the house ? impossible, Señora. Here are three worthy gentlemen and noble, with their servants and attendants, making about a score. The Conde de Puño-en-rostro, from Madrid ; the Duque de Híjar, from Aragon ; and the Marques de Villamierda, from Gallicia ; all high-born Cavalleros,—the fittest companions in the world for any Señora, from a Duchess to a dueña.”

“ Thou rogue ! thou art a falsifier of noble names, and a very robber of

dignities ; the Count of Puño-en-rostro never entered lady's chamber without permission."

" An thou sayst that I be not Count of Puño-en-rostro, thou mayst thank thy petticoat and veil that thou hast not a buffet on the ear. If a man said so I'd puño-en-rostro * him."

A coarse laugh followed this speech, which at once satisfied the lady, if she had any doubts before, that the man who assumed his name was not the real Conde de Puño-en-rostro. She began to see through the innkeeper's practical joke, and might have laughed at it, had she not observed through a peep-hole which she contrived to

* The title of Puño-en-rostro was conferred on Don Juan Arias by Charles V, for his undaunted conduct during the wars of the Commons, at the beginning of his reign. It literally means *fist in face*.

leave herself in the covering, that these noble and polite Cavalleros began to doff their doublets, and give other indications of occupying the empty beds in the room.

“ Hold, gentlemen,” said she; “ since you are gentlemen, act as such, and do not offend the delicacy of those helpless and dependent creatures whom it is your sworn duty to protect and to befriend. Good master Honesty,” addressing the host, “ thy charge is monstrous and quite unpayable; but provided these Cavalleros immediately leave the apartment, and return no more, my dueña shall disburse to thee the sum of three ducats in the morning.”

“ ’Tis too late, Señora,” said master Rock, “ to compromise for charges now, even if I would; these noblemen would not now take to the road again

in the middle of the night ; nevertheless, if thy dueña's disbursement amounted to six ducats, I would——”

“ Turn them into the stable, in spite of their nobility ! and it will not be the first time that these knights have been so installed. You take me at vantage, master Honesty, and I must perforce yield—go to—look on the six ducats as thine own.”

“ I shall be right glad to look on them when they are produced. My mother taught me the old proverb by a new version, ‘ a ducat in hand is worth two on a bond,’ was her maxim, and I am her own child, Señora.”

“ Thou canst not doubt the word of a Duchess, good host, and as such thou hast recognised me by most infallible tokens ; but withdraw with these rude guests, and thy demands shall be satisfied forthwith.”

Master Rock turned himself to the pretended nobles, who were making the most of their short-lived dignities, in appearance, at least, by apeing an honourable bearing, as an actor at Astley's performs the pride of a king. They stood with their hats on their heads, their long swords held by the hilts almost to their shoulders, their shoulders themselves raised, and stiffened, their cheeks inflated, and their brows bent, to endeavour to make up for the absence of mustachios in giving a gentlemanlike fierceness to the countenance. "Most excellent Count Puño-en-rostro," said master Rock, "I have a million times to apologise to your lordship."

"No apology, master Puño-en-bolsa, or what d'ye call em——."

Here the well-devised, well-executed plan of master Rock, that had hitherto

met with such ample success,—even now, at the moment that it approached its completion, was interrupted in its progress in a most disagreeable manner ;—disagreeable for all parties, but most especially for the unhappy lady, upon whose purse master Rock had made so able an attack. Three or four men in black cloaks, one having a short white staff in his hand, and all wearing swords, stepped from behind the crowd of followers who attended upon the three personated noblemen, and put an end to the feigned Count's speech by saying, “ This lady is a prisoner of the Holy Inquisition.”

A faint scream was heard from the lady's bed, whilst the sudden shaking of that which contained the dueña betrayed the trepidation of the occupier ; and it was further indicated by

the audible chattering of her teeth, that alone broke the silence which almost instantly followed.

I really have not yet recovered the effects of my last chapter in the Palace of the Inquisition; and the necessity of introducing any of its officers upon the scene again, has re-thrown me into a very nervous state. The reader must excuse me, therefore, if I leave all the disagreeable part of these officers' commission to be acted in his own imagination, while I follow the incidents of the night into another channel.

The appearance of the alguazils, even before their leading officer spoke, had the same effect in master Rock's many-bedded room that a shell has when it falls in a crowded battery before it bursts; every body took to his heels: master Rock, with his Count,

his Duke, and his Marquis, and their panic-struck attendants, all vanished with the rapidity of exorcised demons. Some scrambled down stairs, rushing past an alguazil who was stationed at the top of the ladder, down which several flung themselves into the stable below. Master Rock, who, being foremost in the room, was now hindmost in the flight, finding the mouth of the ladder hole filled with fugitives, stepped into the private nook already described, the door of which he attempted instantly to close at the great risk of crushing the body of the Count of Puño-en-rostro. Master Rock would have preferred being alone, but this was no time for altercation, and, therefore, admitting the Conde, the hands of both were hastily applied to close the door, in which, however, they met with further and forcible ob-

struction. Before they had time to call their shoulders to the assistance of their hands, a violent push made a free passage for the object of their fear—the alguazil, that had been stationed at the top of the ladder, who, bearing a light in his hand, entered, and himself closed the door after him.

The two tremblers fell down upon their knees before this dreaded officer. The alguazil evinced some surprise at the sight of a gentleman in such a posture, and he demanded his name.

“ Juan Rubios,” said the man.

“ Juan Rubios !” repeated the alguazil ; “ whence comes that apparel, base-born peasant, and those arms ? ”

Rubios looked at Rock for an explanation, and Rock returned his look unexplained.

“ Speak, dogs,” said the alguazil ; excited by the tone and tenor of

which command both Rock and Rubios began at the same time to stammer out something, each rendering the other unintelligible.

“ Silence, then, it matters not,” continued the officer, “ give me your sword.”

Rubios rather hesitatingly obeyed ; the officer upon receiving the sword examined it minutely, and seemed much surprised. “ Where didst thou get this sword, and how ? ”

Rubios began a long explanation in reply to this question, which, however, commenced too far from the object of the inquiry to hold out hopes of a speedy termination ; the officer, therefore, interrupted him, “ Answer my question in two words.”

Such a concise reply to such a query was quite beyond the power of Rubios ; master Rock, therefore, sum-

moned up courage to answer for him by saying, "At the castle of Alange, Señor, and by theft."

The alguazil seemed to ponder for a few seconds, and then deliberately setting his light on the ground, he blew it out, leaving them in complete darkness. He had, however, previously placed himself so close to master Rock as to touch with his knee his shoulder as he knelt. As soon as all was dark the two trembling wretches heard the officer unsheath the sword; the miserable master Rock, whose shoulder was the more closely pressed by the alguazil's knee the more he attempted to draw it gradually away, anticipated nothing less than instant immolation, and had no conception but that the naked sword was about to make itself a sheath in

his body ; and the ready Paternoster, which, at other times came so fluently to his lips, was now uttered in confused connection with the *Credo* and the *Ave*. The pause which the alguazil made seemed an hour at least, and the rustling sound of something with which he seemed to be occupied had the most terrifying effect. At last he spoke in a low muttering voice, not, perhaps, meant to be heard, but quite intelligible to ears so alert as those that were listening. “Blessed Mary speed thee,” said he ; and this blessing was accompanied by a noise which, heard in other circumstances, would have been immediately recognised as the sound of a sword returned to its scabbard, but to master Rock’s imagination, heated and alarmed, it clearly conveyed the idea of a sword entering

human flesh, and for some instants he underwent all the agony of being run through the body.

After this mortal wound, the voice of the alguazil recalled master Rock to life. The alguazil had felt for his hand from the shoulder, and placed the sheathed sword in its cold and clammy grasp, and when he found that master Rock had got hold of it, he said, "Nothing can save you from a dungeon in the palace of the Inquisition but your delivering this sword into the owner's hands as soon as it is day; an hour's delay may cost you a year in chains; or if you dare to draw it before you place it in the owner's hands, woe betide you—remember the unsleeping eye of the Inquisition is upon you:" and with this fearful warning he disappeared through the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

Merrily merrily rang the bells,
The bells of St. Michael's tower.

SOUTHEY.

THE wounded body of Vargas required rest, which his wounded mind prevented it from receiving. He could not remain quiet; the perpetual pressure of his miserable thoughts destroyed all repose, and continually impelled him to motion: he got out of his bed, he walked about the castle, he associated with its inhabitants; but the frivolous gravity of father Cachafuto was intolerable, while the frivolous gaiety of Don Felix was hardly less so. The period of more than a week which had elapsed had, however, closed the wound in his side; but the

impatience to obtain information, and the fretful feeling excited by his inactivity under the circumstances which pressed upon him, produced a fever of the mind at times almost amounting to phrenzy. During the interval of his suspense, his attention had been once or twice attracted by the repetition of father Lawrence's penance, in scenes very nearly similar to that which I have already described when Vargas first saw the monk descend the Saracen's Scymitar.

After having passed a sleepless night, during which the figure of the friar had presented itself several times to his imagination, he arose with the sun, and determined that he would pay the ascetic a visit in his hazardous hermitage; and searching for his doublet and sword, that he might equip himself for that purpose, he found that

neither the one nor the other was forthcoming. He was surprised at this, but he conceived that they might have been removed that the one might be brushed and the other polished; and, upon reflection, he thought he remembered hearing some one enter his apartment on the preceding night while he was in a dreaming dose, from which he had not taken the trouble to arouse himself.

He left the turret in which he slept, with the intention of making inquiries concerning them, and in the quadrangle he met Don Felix, who was also without doublet, cloak, or sword. After the salutation, Vargas said, "We meet like men who rise from their beds in alarm, only that our hands are not weaponed."

"Some rogue has removed my apparel from my apartment. Methinks

it would smack of conceit to bedizen my body in my best silk slashed and silver pointed blue doublet to attend the levee of the sun ; besides, when a man is *unmadrided*, as I may say,—is exiled from the excellence of Aonia, and driven to the dullness of Beotia, he thinks not of furnishing fair apparel for his flight, that would be like a cloudless day for an eclipse.”

“ You are not then likely to furnish me for a season, being undoubled as well as unmadrided,” said Vargas.

“ Truth to say,” replied Felix, “ I was seeking your apartment with a similar petition, from granting which I perceive you are similarly disabled.”

Both smiled, and Don Felix resumed, “ We have no resource but to borrow from the Count and Cachafuto ; the one will furnish the mantle of the order of Santiago, and the other

his sumpter-frock of the order of preachers."

"Fortunately we can hardly be driven to such disguises," said Vargas, "since our apparel cannot but be at hand, and probably we only owe our present dilemma to our early rising, which has anticipated the work of the grooms;" and Vargas turned to pace the quadrangle until such time as his missing articles of apparel should reappear.

Don Felix passed from the fortress into its sloping and umbrageous avenue, where, throwing himself on the inclined ground at the root of an old tree, he proceeded in the composition of a pastoral which had occupied him for the last week,—

The boisterous billows booming on the shore,
Ring round the rugged rocks with rolling roar.

ring with a roar?—wouldst thou admit

that, Lope? deny it me, and I appeal to Apollo, and plead *poetarum privilegio*.

Ring round the rugged rocks with rolling roar.
Lucida leads her lovely lambs along;
The swelling surges cease the sounding song;
Waves wash where'er she walks, nor washing
wake

In boisterous billows, but in bubbles break;
The tender treading of her timid toes
Gives gladness to the ground where'er she goes:

Hold, Felix! hast thou not had enough of touching upon toes in thy pastorals?—art thou not at Alange? and what moved thee from Madrid but too much tenderness upon the subject of fair feet." He was about to expunge these lines from his poem, but what father can sentence his own son? what poetaster can condemn his own couplets? After a short consideration, therefore, he gave the

dangerous distich a reprieve, and went on :—

One timid tear tells tales without a tongue ;
Couched on her comely cheek the crystal clung ;
Trembling the trickling treasure downward tends ;
Eddying the envious element extends ;
Seizes the shining sorrow in a shell,
A pearl 'tis petrified——

While Felix was searching the dictionary of his memory under the letter p for an appropriate rhyme for shell, and repeating at intervals “ A pearl 'tis petrified,” Master Rock stood before him with a bundle of clothes under his arm, and a long sword held behind his back.

“ Most excellent Señor,” said the innkeeper, “ I am petrified with dismay at the inconvenience which your Excellency must have suffered by the absence of doublet and rapier, which I have hastened to restore the very

moment I found them ;” and with much hesitation he deposited his bundle and produced the sword.

“ How cam’st thou by them, Sir Thief? now have I good will to give thee the honour of knighthood with the edge of that very sword ;—how came they into thy hands, I say ? ”

“ Ask me not, good Señor ; such mysteries are not for mortal men to meddle with,” said Master Rock, holding out the sword by its point.

“ This is not my sword, villain,” cried Felix ; “ my hand knows nothing of this hilt, nor my enemies of this blade ;” and in examining it he half drew it from the scabbard, in doing which the upper part of the blade appeared enveloped with a small piece of paper.

The very imagination of an adventure was delicious to Felix, he un-

rolled the paper and eagerly read these words—

“ Hope liveth—I send her to thee—take her to thy heart, and let her first-born thought be Courage; put on her wings, and fly to the rescue; the father awaits thee—the daughter lives for thee—thy friend holdeth the lion’s mouth—the monster doth but roar yet—if he devoureth, his first victim shall be M.”

After reading it a second time, and a third, Felix pondered over it, alternately delighted with the mysterious adventure, and bewildered with the obscurity, or rather unintelligibility, of the letter. “ The daughter lives for thee;” here rested his eye and his thought. What daughter? this was an important question, and one difficult to solve, for, amid a variety of Dulcineas, Don Felix had never spe-

cially individualised any as the star of his permanent adoration ; but had occasionally sung the praises of each as the face best suited with his humour, or the name with his verse.—What daughter ? It might be Doña Carambolina Picapestaña—no—it could not be her, she was not peculiarly handsome, nor peculiarly young ; she might perhaps be the roaring monster, for there was a very young and tolerably handsome niece of hers residing with her :—but the affair was too enigmatical for any of the Picapestañas, who were strait forward people. Could it be the young Duchess of Garabato ? Her situation, indeed, might suit the billet, but dare he venture to flatter himself that she would apply to him to “ fly to the rescue.”

“ Felix losing himself in a delightful labyrinth of suppositions, was

totally abstracted from what was passing around him, and Master Rock, who was tremblingly alive to the truth of the proverb, “with the King and the Inquisition hush!” thought he could best secure himself from any danger of neglecting the warning which it gave, by withdrawing his person with all possible silence and celerity: this he accordingly did, and he managed so well that when Felix turned from his letter to make further inquiries concerning it, he could no where find the bearer of it. He shouted two or three times, and his shouts were heard indeed by Rock, but the prudent inn-keeper did not conceive that the adoption of his nick-name necessarily conveyed any of the properties of petrification, and he did not return the sound which he received, but left the woods to echo Don Felix’s cry,—

a duty which they performed quite to his satisfaction. Felix did not continue his shouts, but donning the doublet that had been deposited on the ground by master Rock he entered further into the wood, that he might be the more retired, whilst he endeavoured to unravel this mysterious epistle.

In the meanwhile Vargas's mind was equally abstracted, but in a less pleasing manner. When he was not called upon for immediate action, his thoughts constantly reverted to the horrors of his situation—to the torments of the Inquisition—to the possibility of assisting Cornelia. These subjects had thoroughly taken possession of him while he was pacing up and down the quadrangle, an exercise which he had commenced while waiting for the appearance of his apparel, but which he

had continued a considerable time without thinking upon the cause or length of his walk. After some space he was recalled to the recollection of both by the Benedicite of father Cachafuto, who followed his blessing with “truly it promises to be an indifferent hot day; and if the sun had been risen ten hours instead of two, good Señor, I might have commended the convenience of your clothing, or rather of your lack of clothing, but at this hour of day I scarce remember having forgotten my frock when I left my couch.”

“One of the grooms has taken a fancy to my doublet and rapier this morning,” said Vargas; “or perhaps,” he continued, “(for I heed not how they went) San Cachafuto may have felt cold in the night, and may have provided himself with them. Your

paternity may probably be able to prevail upon the Saint to surrender them."

The sacrilegious part of this supposition produced a frown from the friar, which, however, was tempered by a good natured perception of the ironical part, and the latter feeling, strongly aided by his habitual disposition, would certainly have overcome the former, if Vargas had not injudiciously added, "or he might perhaps, have required the sword to ride about with in the air on a white horse to the terror of all unbelievers like Saint James the slayer of Saracens."

The conquering smile lost its triumph almost in the moment of victory, being overpowered by a strong reinforcement of frown that suddenly appeared on the field of the friar's countenance. There was something

dubious, and not thoroughly established in the miraculous powers of San Cachafuto, and the friar was conscious that the application which he had made of them, might subject both himself and his saint in a slight degree to jocular mention with impunity ; but the salvation of every man's soul was, as Cachafuto conceived, immediately connected with his firm belief in all the miracles ascribed to St. James, from the stone boat at Joppa to the white horse at Albeyda, as set forth in the papal Bulls ; and now the friar's frown intimated nothing less than a conviction of heresy.

But the transient feeling of hilarity which irresistibly communicated itself even to Vargas upon the appearance of Cachafuto's good tempered face, was exhausted in the slight attack upon his patron saint ; and now his

frowns and his smiles were equally indifferent to the heavy heart of Vargas, who turned from him, and mounted the steps of his apartment, while the friar in high anger wasted his frowns upon the desert air.

“ Shall I denounce the heretic to the Commissary of the Inquisition at Alanje ? ” muttered Cachafuto ; “ or shall I undertake his conversion myself ? or shall I turn him over to father Lawrence ? It is fitting at all events that the Count should know that he harbours a heretic within the Christian fortress of Alange ; aye, and one whose heresy touches upon the tenderest point—the religion of the blessed Saint under whose protection and patronage the castle and the Count are specially placed. Santiago protect us ! no wonder that I dreamt last night of falling from the Saracen’s

Scymitar, since there is such pollution so near," and he went to seek the Count accordingly.

In his apartment Vargas found a doublet and sword, which, though not his own, he applied to his own use for the time, and he went forth determining to fulfil his original intention of visiting the hermitage of father Lawrence. The way to it was by a foot-path on the very ridge of the rock, dizzy indeed in itself, but a causeway compared to the Saracen's Scymitar. Those who walked along this path needed not to approach so near to the dreadful abyss on the one side; and the sloping descent on the other, although it was steep, yet afforded footing, and at a short distance downwards commenced the great wood which extended almost to the venta below. Still to go along this

path was very like walking along the angular point on the roof of a tiled house, and the sensations which such a promenade afforded to one inexperienced in the path did not produce ideas of much greater safety.

Three or four hundred yards from the fortress the way descended a little, and led the passenger down to the skirts of the wood ; before it had proceeded far in that direction, the top of the mountain shelved down to it in uneven edges, as if large pieces had been violently torn from the summit. By this path Vargas was conducted to a small platform, from whence the precipitous descent of the rock commenced. At the first glance he deemed it impossible to proceed any further, and it would have been so but that the trees with which the side was studded served as the steps of a gigantic lad-

der, and, being generally at the distance of from seven to eight feet apart, formed safe and accessible footing one after the other.

In this manner Vargas descended a considerable distance, until he arrived at a spot, that, as it projected a little from the rock, which besides had been artificially excavated for the purpose, afforded a level surface to stand upon. From hence a path proceeded horizontally for several yards, upon a ledge nearly as narrow as the Saracen's Scymitar; and it would have been quite as dangerous, if the devout peasants who sought in penance the absolution of holy father Lawrence had not contrived to lessen its danger by fastening some strong boughs closely together, in the manner of a rough railwork, along its external edge, rendering the groove in which Vargas now walked

not unlike a large rut in a cross country road.

By this uncomfortable footway Vargas arrived at the bottom of the eminence upon which stood the chapel of Santiago and the cell of father Lawrence. Chapels of this sort were usually erected wherever there was danger or difficulty in reaching them. The modern traveller in Spain will hardly see a pathless pinnacle, without finding it surmounted by one of these picturesque objects, which were formerly inhabited by ascetics, who acquired great sanctity by their situation and office. The devout sinners of the neighbourhood imposed upon themselves journeys to these perilous altars, which self-selected penance, together with the offering that they carried, failed not to purchase for them absolution and quietness of con-

science. The ermita of father Lawrence was sufficiently difficult of access to entitle those who reached it to purification from any crime which could be imagined by a common man, though not, perhaps, an inquisitor; for, after the difficulties Vargas had surmounted, he found that he had to ascend a perpendicular rock by means of notches cut into it for steps; and the only assistance which he could make use of to effect this fearful ascent was offered by a rope made of the long blades of a dry grass, fastened to the trunk of a small tree growing by the side of the chapel, which was built upon a flat promontory of the rock, at least thirty feet above the spot where he stood.

Looking upwards to ascertain the height he had to climb, he was struck by an object which of all others he

least expected to find in such a situation, and which certainly did not appear to be in good keeping with the sanctity of the scene. It was a young man with something of a military appearance, who sat upon the level ground above, with his feet hanging over the dangerous depth, not only in perfect security, but having in his hand a guitar, which he was in the act of preparing for use, and which he struck almost at the moment that Vargas first perceived him. The manner of his music bespoke him a plebeian, for he moved the nails of his fingers across the strings of the instrument, while he at the same time knocked upon the face of it with the side of his thumb. After a certain space occupied in a rude prelude of this rattling music, while he produced a long note with a voice which, though untaught, was more naturally

soft, and not so boisterous as is usually heard from the lower peasantry of Spain, he commenced a song which seemed superior to plebeian composition.

Woman is like the leaf of May,
Gladsome, glossy, green, and gay;
Forward, fluttering, fresh, and fair,
Coquetting with each courting air:
A slender stem in kind connexion
Binds her to man,—'tis named Affection.
While ever soothes the summer south,
She lightly lingers, nothing loth;
When wintry wind of want comes on,
The fetter fails, 'tis snapped and gone,
And the man bears the blast alone.

Woman, like egg of bird in air,
Is pure and polished, smooth and fair;
But still in sleep—to death a kin—
The latent spirit lurks within;
'Tis task of Love the glow to give,
And bid the slumb'ring spirit live;
A beating bosom, tender, warm,
Dispels the deathness, breaks the charm:
Love gives it life,—with life it brings,
Alas! too sure, a pair of wings,
And, all ungrateful, off she springs.

It was so strange a thing to hear such a song, so accompanied, in such a place, that even Vargas's curiosity was awakened in some degree; and when the song ceased, he commenced his ascent of the ladder of notches. He was soon at the top, and he found himself at an awful elevation above every surrounding object, upon a spot, which, having originally presented a more level surface than any other part of this end of the rock, had been rendered perfectly so by great labour. The place was so small that the little chapel of Santiago occupied nearly a third of its whole extent; and the cell of the father built behind it, combined to fill up one half, leaving a small sort of terrace in front, upon which Vargas now stood before the man who had been singing, and who upon perceiving him had hastily got

upon his feet, and retired to the porch of the chapel.

He was rather a handsome stout man, with a countenance embrowned by travel, and an eye, the glance of which was sharpened by wild habits: there was a daring in his look; but at the same time there was a freedom from care, and a recklessness in his manner which rather conciliated than repelled those who conversed with him. Upon the whole, he looked very much like what he really was—a soldier of a superior cast who had served in the dreadful contest in the Netherlands, where he had acquired all the habits of a freebooter.

They looked at each other for some time without speaking, until at last Vargas broke the silence: “If you are a penitent here, my friend, you come with a light load of sin, that

your penance is performed so merrily."

"Our father here," said the man, "is not of that opinion; but I don't know how 'tis, some men carry their loads easier than others."

"That load could scarcely be called easy, which had need of being brought up here to be got rid of, methinks."

"But I came here, Señor, half for sanctuary, and half for absolution, and all for safety."

"Sanctuary! friend! hast thou broken the laws of thy country?"

"Why so they say," replied the singer; "I did but let loose the breath of a scoundrel, that it might tell no more lies, and make no more women false."

A murderer, thought Vargas, and shuddered; and as, by a natural concatenation of ideas, the wooden cross under the tree on the Saracen's Scy-

mitar came into his mind, he could not help thinking that a malicious spirit might be puzzled to choose between that spot and the one on which he now stood for the perpetration of a murder. He had, however, no anticipation of receiving injury from this man, and apparently the soldier had laid aside all fear of him, for in perfect confidence he came from the porch, and resumed his giddy seat on the edge of the rock: he continued speaking.

“ Now if I were to judge by appearances, as you have done, and measure the weight of your sin by the way that it drags upon your brow, I should say that you had committed sacrilege, or high treason at the least ; against which there is neither sanctuary nor safety ; but the way in which you missed your mark shall make me

wiser in hitting mine. Mayhap you come here neither on penance nor for sanctuary ; the good father selleth indulgences that bear the Romish rubrick withal. Thou mayst buy one here to knock off all the revenge that nestles in thy eye-brows."

" There does not breathe a human being," said Vargas, " whose life I would injure in revenge, although I possessed all the foregiven pardon that all the power of all the popes that ever lived could grant. Thy aim is wider from the mark even than mine was."

" Oh, then, woman has set her evil eye on thee—Saint Anthony help thee, Señor. For my part, an I were Inquisitor-General of the Spains I'd burn every thing that wore a veil, and make womanhood first proof of witchcraft. Nothing but devilish devices

and unpractiseable arts, could possibly have given them the power to fool away a man's brains as they do, and make his hand fly as fast to cold steel as the steel would to the loadstone. Out upon it—I believe that love is the identical evil one that holy men call the devil; and if not that very he, then a very wicked imp and a wild.—What says the 'Tirana*?'” and rattling on his guitar, he gave forth a verse of a popular song.

When Cupid first enters the bosom,
He makes all its inhabitants start;
But as Reason and Prudence don't choose him,
They guard the high road to the heart:
But with Reason not wishing to meddle,
He contrives through some crevice to creep;
On the heart he reclines as his cradle,
And their efforts but rock him to sleep.

The tirana turned the current of his ideas, and he went on for a dozen

* A familiar name for a gypsey song.

verses, immersed in the gaiety of his occupation, and completely forgetting the gravity of the subject which led him to it. Vargas gazed on him with wonder, and could hardly believe that the nimble fingers which drew forth the accompaniment to such boisterous satisfaction were stained with the blood of a fellow creature.

He was interrupted in his contemplations by the violent ringing of the chapel bell, in what appeared to him to be an unusual and an irregular manner.

“Do you know the cause of that uneven chime?” asked Vargas.

“Poor father Lawrence is beset, that’s all,” replied the man; “he has taken the privilege of the barefooted Carmelite in the song.”

“What privilege is that?” inquired Vargas.

“ Don’t you know the Redondilla of the Carmelite Friar ? ” said his companion, “ I thought every fool knew that.”

“ Perhaps that may be the reason why I know it not, not being of the fraternity.”

“ Ah ! few of the members of that fraternity acknowledge the connexion; and those that are born heirs in the family seldom take up the title, although their neighbours honestly give it to them.”

Here the bell rung again more violently than before, and its rapid jingling served to arrest the tongue of the penitent, and to bring it to the subject from which it had just begun to wander. As his right hand was now unoccupied (which it had not been upon the first peal from the chapel) he employed it in crossing himself as

he hastily ran over an ill-pronounced *Ave*.

“ The poor monk shall not want my petition, since he calls for it so loudly. You understand not his call, good Señor, as it seems; and you never heard the Redondilla of the Carmelite friar, as you say. Well, what says the proverb,

From seven to seventy every sun,
May be marked by a novelty learnt while it run.

Lend an ear, then, and mark me down in your memory the story of the Carmelite's bell, as the special learning of to-day.” So saying, he resumed his rattling music, to which, after short space for prelude and preparation, he sang the following country couplets.

In a Carmelite Convent of barefooted friars
Was a brother tormented with wicked desires;
For old Nick took a fancy so fiercely to tempt him,
That from falling it needed the Pope to exempt
him.

Ding dong bell.

At first he resisted the tempter's attack,
And most scornfully beat master Beelzebub back ;
But as day after day harder fought the soul-
seeker,
The barefooted friar grew weaker and weaker.
Ding dong bell.

Though the friar at first had thought proper to
slight him,
He now found it too much single-handed to fight
him ;
But, beseeching the Abbot, he soon got it
granted
That the brothers should aid him whenever he
wanted.
Ding dong bell.

Says the Abbot, " whenever the foul one attacks
Seize the rosary strait, 'tis the true battle-axe ;
And their beads that the brothers to aid you may
tell,
You may sound pretty loud on the small chapel
bell."
Ding dong bell.

The friars were jovially set at the board,
And the Vintner and Manciple spread out their
hoard ;
" Benedic " had been said, and each cheek 'gan
to swell,
When, hark ! a loud peal from the chapel bell.
Ding dong bell.

The monks were all placed in confessional chair,
And each had to shrive a fair penitent there,
Who scarce had begun their peccados to tell,
When, hark a long peal from the chapel bell.

Ding dong bell.

The monks their siesta were snoring away,
And stealing in sleep from the heat of the day ;
But who the alarm of the convent shall tell
At the sound of a peal from the chapel bell.

Ding dong bell.

The friars retired in the evening hour
To repose in the shade of the orange bower ;
Or to drink of the spring from the freezing well,
When, hark ! a full peal from the chapel bell.

Ding dong bell.

The friars were pressing their couches at night,
When from pallet and pillow they start in affright ;
Is't a signal of fire, or miraculous knell,
Oh no ! father Francis is tolling his bell.

Ding dong bell.

The Abbot was sitting a chapter to hold,
To talk of their lands, and to tell o'er their gold,
Away parchments and treasure were hurried pell
mell,

Father Francis was tolling the chapel bell.

Ding dong bell.

Enraged at the nuisance the Abbot at length
Cries, " this trial exceedeth my temper's
strength ;

And a man who has so much to do with the devil,
By communion among us will bring us to evil.

Ding dong bell.

“ Since our prayers have been useless as yet to
unhell him,

I vote, my dear brothers, 'twere right to expel
him;

And send out from our convent the troublesome
elf

To fight the foul fiend how he can by himself.”

Ding dong bell.

Father Francis was called,—second thoughts are
oft best,

And the Abbot thus set the whole matter at rest :

“ Father Francis, we order thee, cease all this
riot,

Let old Nick have his way, and let us have our
quiet.”

Ding dong bell.

While the merry penitent was singing this popular song, it happened several times that the real ding dong, or rather tingle tingle (for the bell was small), which was caused by father Lawrence's repeated application to the rope in the chapel, fell in so aptly with the return of the imitated ding

long in the chorus of the song, that the singer's risibility was strongly acted upon ; and he was so tickled by the coincidence of this serious illustration of his joking ditty, that his progress was interrupted by bursts of laughter. Vargas stood for some time contemplating with a melancholy and misanthropic feeling, the inconsistent and degraded combination before him in the shape of a fellow man : he was musing upon the extraordinary compound of crime and carelessness, misery and merriment, irreverence and bigotry, which formed the mind of this man. As the two figures were contrasted together, they might have been taken for the grouping of a painter in the two characters of Heraclitus and Democritus. But the continued and hearty mirth of the Democritus, combining its contagion

with the exciting aptness of the chapel bell to the story, soon banished every characteristic of Heraclitus from the countenance of Vargas, and taught him to laugh almost as heartily, though not so boisterously, as his less grave companion.

This ill-suited answer to the call from within the chapel, was speedily interrupted by the appearance of father Lawrence himself in the porch with a broken cord in his hand, which had evidently once belonged to the bell. His countenance had the immediate effect of silencing the short-lived laughter of Vargas, though the more violent mirth of his reckless companion was proof even against the rage which was rising in the friar's breast, and he still continued his unrestrained bursts. The austere and strongly marked physiognomy of the

ascetic, kindled from sternness into an expression of fury, as he darted a glance full of fire at the mirthful faces of those whom he found upon coming forth from the chapel. Gazing with increased passion upon the young man who still continued to laugh, he poured out a powerful anathema, not in the language of the church, but in the sounding idiom of his native tongue. The passionate emotion shook the feeble frame of the old man, and, by impeding his utterance in a slight degree, gave additional effect to his trembling enunciation by heightening the conception of the feelings which impelled him, without sinking them below the dignity of indignation. The laugh was heard no more, but the father raged on : “ Wretch ! -darest thou raise thy impious mockery at a combat which, coward and villain

thou hast slunk from, and given thy soul to the enemy without one effort to preserve it! Bringst thou here thy blood-polluted hand to tune an imp-dance while the fiend assails me. Shall I not hurl thee from this height? let him save thee if he can." In the energy of his passion the old man hurled the broken cord which he held in his hand at the devoted minstrel, who stood at the very edge of the precipice, and not many yards from him. In such a giddy situation it required good nerves not to give way, even to the imagination of an impulse, but the penitent not only possessed nerve sufficient to combat the anticipation of danger, but also activity sufficient to evade the approach of real peril. Crouching down, he crept on his hands and knees sideways, until he reached the spot whence the descent from this

eagle's nest was to be effected, and in a few moments he was at the bottom, upon the little path before described, while the whirling rope, sent forth from the hand of the friar, took its revolving flight afar down the precipice until it was stopped by the branches of a large tree many, many feet below. The friar gazed for a while upon it as it descended, and, turning suddenly away, he re-entered the chapel.

CHAPTER XVII.

Hither thy powerfulest anathema,
And hurl me forth the demon that besets him ;
Headlong dislodge him with such penal force,
That, like the bullet from the cannon's mouth
Whizzing his unavoidable way,
His horns be rooted in the pit's last depth.

FROM THE SPANISH.

VARGAS suffered a considerable time to elapse before he ventured to follow father Lawrence into the chapel. When at length he did so, he found the unhappy man kneeling before the little altar with his body humbly bent, and occasionally striking his breast forcibly with his clenched hand. Vargas was strongly moved at the sight of the humility which appeared in the friar's manner and position, and, yielding to

the impulse which he felt, he also sunk upon his knee, and put up a sincere prayer for mercy to the distracted mind before him.

While he was thus occupied, father Lawrence arose, and, turning round, he saw the action of Vargas. The friar's countenance was now totally altered from what it had been during the influence of his irritated feelings. Even its usual austerity was softened into a self-condemning expression, and he gazed upon Vargas with a serenity to which his features were but little accustomed. When Vargas had risen, father Lawrence spoke mildly to him :
“ It seems as if you were destined, young man, to witness all the weaknesses and struggles of the miserable spirit that inhabits this wretched frame. Hast thou not been shocked to see

me possessed by the fiend of anger, which, mocking the old man's boasted self-possession, has borne him with a whirlwind of passion to the very brink of active crime?"

"I felt for you, good father, and I justly estimated the provocation which you had received whilst employed in the functions of your religion. It was most unbecoming and indecent to give such interruption to your occupation, and for the share which I unwittingly took in the fault, I do most sincerely beg your pardon."

"Oh!" replied father Lawrence, "'twas the mirth of yon insensible son of Cain that ruffled me,—that maddened me. Man cannot imagine a penance that will make him feel the weight of crime. But the treasury of sainted deeds shall be shut to him. I

will not absolve him. Will he laugh in the pit? Will he be merry in purgatory?"

"The unhappy man is an assassin too," said Vargas; "is he not?"

"The wretch!" replied the friar, "he *did* a death,* and is contented;—aye, and bawls forth his brute happiness in profane noises. *I* did no death! *I* shortened the trial of no immortal soul. The heavenly host be praised that averted the deadliness of the deed; and yet the long chain of my expiating existence, what is it but one hour of misery linked to another?"

"Sad indeed," said Vargas, "if I may judge from what I have seen you undergo midway down the rock——"

The friar's countenance changed, and become characterised by the gloomy gathering of a mental storm.

* Hizò una muerte.

“ Ah, thou hast seen my combats too, there, where I was conquered once to conquer often since. Could I but redeem the consequences of that first defeat! But 'twas no murder, I tell thee! The infant cradled on yon tree as safely as on its mother's lap—'twas no murder, though the fiend call it one. Go count the stones that lie by the root of that saviour tree; every stone is the register of a pilgrimage to the place, uncowed, unfrocked, with bare head to the sun, and bare knee to the rock; will not their number redeem my one crime?”

“ Alas, no!” replied Vargas; “ it costs more, much more, to redeem thee?”

“ And have I not that *much more*?” asked the friar impatiently. “ Is it not to me specially? is it not given to others through me?”

“ No ! ” answered Vargas boldly ;
“ you have it not ; neither do you
dispense it to others ! ”

The astonishment depicted in the friar’s countenance was beyond all expression ; it completely deprived him of utterance for a moment, and Vargas went on : “ You have corrupted the pure stream of life, by drinking which alone you can be redeemed ;— you have dammed up its current, and turned its clear waters away from the thirsty flock of which you are the hireling, and not the true shepherd. Such penance as you blindly preach, and more blindly practise, can purify you as much as the traditional washing of the Pharisees, and no more.—You have falsified the truth, and made it of non-effect to salvation—”

While Vargas imprudently permitted his feelings to carry him far be-

yond what any man in his senses, and who valued his liberty and his life, dared to have uttered, between the peaks of the Pyrennees and the shores of the Atlantic, father Lawrence recovered, in some degree, from his astonishment, and his mind acting in its beaten track instantly caught the idea which was most familiar with his diseased imagination.

“The fiend! the fiend!” he exclaimed; “Avaunt—approach not. Thou many-figured demon, I defy thee! It was thyself that let the infant fall from my arms—that *flung* it from them; and for my sin that I permitted thee, the deeds of the saints, bought by my own penance, have wiped it away. I can meet thee undaunted, thou foul fiend, at the tree on the rock, or here, in the house of Saint James,—in heaven above, or in

thine own accursed place below. I command thee in the great name of the holy patron of this chapel, away—away—away—away!——”

As he said this with the most impassioned gestures and action, raising his rosary in one hand, and clenching the other at an equal elevation, he ventured to advance a few steps upon the person whose heretical language had convinced him that he was possessed by the actual spirit of evil, his great enemy. Vargas naturally retreated backwards before him, regarding him with a mixture of surprise and pity. Three or four paces brought him to the door of the chapel, near which stood the stone font, containing holy water for the use of those who entered the church. Over this font hung the *hisopo*, an instrument exactly resembling a modern bottle brush,

used by the priest to sprinkle the holy water upon the people. When father Lawrence's eye fell upon this, his courage rose as at the sight of sure assistance, and darting forward towards the alarmed Vargas, he seized the hisopo, and, emersing it hastily in the full font, he bestowed upon him a plentiful shower of its contents, accompanying them with the rapid repetition of the form of exorcism then used in the church.

With his eyes full of the washings of all the dirty fingers that had dropped beads at Saint James's altar for the last week (and father Lawrence's reputation for sanctity rendered it probable that they were not few), Vargas made the best of his way down the ladder of notches, not perhaps so rapidly as the young soldier who had gone before him, but with an equal

desire to get beyond the reach of the inflamed and bigoted priest, who, not venturing to step without the consecrated ground, where he considered himself in a fortified territory, stood within the chapel porch, with the hisopo in one hand, and his beads in the other, rolling forth the deepest anathema which his heated imagination could suggest.

Vargas made the best of his way to return to the fortress of Alange, and perhaps he went the safer, because his thoughts were intent upon the extraordinary scenes he had just witnessed. He could not forbear drawing a comparison between the two beings with whom he had been conversing, upon whose minds the commission of the same crime had produced such different effects; and he scarcely knew which was the greater object of pity, the hardened and insensible crea-

ture who was incapable of remorse, for having taken away the life of his fellow-man, and whose enslaved mind was satisfied with the acquittance of a ritual absolution ; or the bigoted ascetic, who was tremblingly alive to the enormity of his crime, but whose proud mind sought to purchase an atonement for the rooted corruptions of his heart, by insane inflictions of corporal punishment. The instinctive gaiety of the one also served to place him in still stronger contrast with the characteristic irritability of the other, and Vargas continued to contemplate them as studies of human character, until having now entered the wood, he was interrupted by an exclamation from the root of a neighbouring tree.

“ Fly to the rescue !—the father awaits thee !—the daughter lives for thee !—That the father should await

me, may either mean that he awaits for weal or for woe, for bliss or for bane, for the crossing of hands, or for the crossing of swords. Now the father of the lovely Amartilla is a very reasonable father, and would cross himself fifty times at mention of the possibility of the crossing of swords once; but the Duchess of Garabato's father may be the identical monster whose mouth my friend is kindly holding open; and if I were near, I would release him from his troublesome task by thrusting this sword down his throat,—this sword—this mysterious messenger;”—and Felix held up the sword which Master Rock had given to him.

“That sword is mine, Don Felix,” said Vargas, recognising his newly acquired Toledo.

These few words had the effect of

bursting the romantic air-bubble which Felix's imagination had been so pleasantly employed in forming. It naturally occurred to him at once that the mysterious epistle was most probably intended for the right owner of the sword, and holding forth the paper which still remained unfolded in his hand, he asked, "Is this Spanish to you, Señor? to me it is Arabic."

Vargas hastily read the note, and instantly gathered all the hidden meaning it contained. When Felix had informed him how it had fallen into his possession, he was indeed at a loss to imagine the means of its conveyance, but every part of it fitted too well with his own story, to allow him to think that he was mistaken in believing that it came from Meneses. "This letter," said he, "is right good and joyful Spanish to me, to whom it

needed no other address than to be placed in the scabbard of my own sword; it has immediate reference to my own affairs."

Felix could not but feel disappointment at this annihilation of all his morning's cogitations, and he was seeking for fit expression of his regret, when any expression of it was rendered unnecessary by the disappearance of Vargas, whose thoughts, wholly intent upon the letter he had received, had not adverted to the propriety of taking a courteous leave of Don Felix. He was walking away with the letter in one hand, and his recovered sword in the other, when he was arrested by a loud call from Felix.

"A choleric man might be pardoned for taking offence at your strange bearing, Don Bartolomé," said Felix; "and, if he were suspicious, he might

imagine that you carried away both our swords to prevent the consequences of their being in both our hands."

Vargas for the first time remembered that he had a sword by his side, which he had found in his apartment. "Is this your sword, Don Felix?" said he, unbuckling the belt.

"In acknowledging my Toledo," replied Felix, "I beg also to recognise my Madrid."

"Your Madrid!" said Vargas; "pray what is that?"

"Since the best-tempered blades," continued Felix, "are styled Toledos, because there, and there only, can they be so tempered, so, by parity of argument, the best fashioned doublets may be called Madrids, because assuredly there and there only do exist the admirable artists who are able to

produce them. And truly I have never felt so thoroughly unmadrided as since my body has ceased to fill up the springing symmetry of yon doublet."

Vargas relinquished both the Madrid and the Toledo, and assumed his own inferior doublet, which Felix had taken off. This was done in silence, until at length Vargas spoke:—

"We are about to part, Don Felix, and I thank you for the courteous reception I have met with at Alange. If it should ever happen that the unfortunate Bartolomé Vargas can be of any service to you, you may freely command me."

"As for your reception at Alange, Don Bartolomé, for that you have to thank my uncle, and him only; but whither goest thou? towards the centre? to Madrid?"

“ Towards the centre,” replied Vargas, “ but not to Madrid ; my centre is at Seville.”

“ Then,” said Felix, “ we live in the light of different suns, which, being an impossibility, we will say that one is the moon, but which of the two I will not determine. I am sorry that you are going from the fortress, although we have not overburthened each other with discourse ; but the possibility of speaking to a third person is a luxury at Alange, where, of the other two, the first can only talk of Saint James, and the second of Saint everything. I shall go too :— there are rumours of arms to be handled, and fields to be fought, in Aragon. My father will have a baton there, and I’ll go to carry his lance.”

The subject of arms in Aragon induced Vargas to enter into some detail of the affairs of that kingdom,

and of the case of Antonio Perez, as they walked together to the castle. Felix took fire at the account shortly given by Vargas, and, mounting alternately his Bucephalus and his Pegasus, he darted so far out of the sphere of his companion's more sobered imagination, that Vargas parted from him in the quadrangle, and sought the Count that he might civilly return his thanks and take his leave.

He found the Count in close conference with Cachafuto: and the gravity of their countenances was not in the least altered by the entrance of Vargas. The Conde made no attempt at any salutation; but, addressing his chaplain, said loud enough to be heard, "Here comes the Saracen himself. The Inquisition; still I give my voice for the Inquisition."

"Allow me to repeat to your Ex-

cellency," said Cachafuto, " my thorough conviction that the unhappy creature is possessed by the demon of heresy, but I will exorcise him : and let me warn you not to speak one word,—not to open your honourable and Catholic lips, while I cast forth the spirit, lest he should take refuge in your Excellency."

" Santiago forbend ! " cried the alarmed Count.

" I am at a loss to guess," said Vargas——

But Cachafuto stopped him by a vociferation of "*Exorciso te Diabolo qui venit vexare este miserabile creatura et mando te sub pene excommunicatione, et poniente in laco ardente por mil años, eo exire;*" and his Castilianated Latin, or Latined Spanish, being sadly at fault, he manfully brought his exorcism to a close, by

bawling out “ *vete con el Diablo*—get you gone to the Devil.”

Vargas, although exceedingly astonished at this unexpected and inhospitable attack, yet had neither temper nor time to investigate its cause ; but fairly outbawling Cachafuto at the end of his unintelligible harangue, he forced his short farewell to their ears. “ Señor Conde de Alange, for your former hospitality I thank you, for your present madness, I pity you ; and so farewell ; ” and turning on his heel he left the apartment.

“ Verily the demon hath departed,” cried Cachafuto in delight ; and seizing the small crucifix which hung at his belt he began to sing out,

Salve crux sancta,
Quâ dantur munera tanta;

but as this part of the Romish exor-

cism was not very commonly in use, at least at Alange, the chaplain's memory had retained no more than the first couplet, and he therefore stopped short with a question to the Count,—
“ Does not your Excellency smell the brimstone ? ”

“ If thou smellest brimstone, I had better not open my mouth yet ; and it were well also if I held my nose, lest the demon should enter by the smell ; but as yet I have no such scent in my nostrils.”

“ Fear not, Señor Conde,” resumed Cachafuto ; “ I smell the evil spirit in my clerical character ; 'tis a certain proof that my exorcism has had its due effect, and that the demon flew away in consequence thereof.”

While the Count and his chaplain discussed this important point, and rejoiced at the signal victory which

had been obtained, Vargas delayed but a few minutes to arrange his slender wardrobe in his valise, and he was shortly at the door of the venta. The rapidity with which intelligence of all kinds is promulgated, from those that are interested in it to those that are not, has been always matter of wonder amongst all sorts of people: it would therefore be common-place to affect astonishment at being obliged to state, that somehow or other Master Rock had become acquainted with the fact, that the evil spirit having possessed the person of Vargas, and shown his cloven foot to father Cachafuto, had made a desperate attack upon father Lawrence, who having met one horn with a rosary, and the other with a hisopo, had forced him to take to his wings and tail in discomfiture; that in his retreat he had at-

tempted to possess the body and soul of no less a person than the Conde himself, but had been again defeated by means of a powerful exorcism from Cachafuto. This miracle of miracles was the subject of conversation between Master Rock and a shrewd lad, who risked death from starvation by living upon the bounty of the innkeeper; that is to say, the master put him daily in mind that he was taken in charity, to which assertion the boy assented, but with a mental addition that his earnings were worth double the value of the crust and the onion that were his daily portion, and with the clear inference that he was the creditor and not the debtor.

“ Well,” said Juanillo, “ right saith the proverb, ‘ from the still waters may the saints save me ; from the

storm I'll save myself.' * Who would have thought that there was harm in that cavallero by the look of him."

"Who would have thought it?—Why I would have thought it," echoed the innkeeper: "In the first place there were five rolls of the skin in his forehead,—a sure sign of evil within; then the curl of his lips lay downwards,—a certain proof that the words that came from it had a natural tendency to the place below:—Then his eye,—life o' Saint Anthony! his eye was impish;—when it first fell upon me, said I to myself, that man was born on Good Friday;† there was Zahori written on the ball on't."

* Del agua mansa me libre Dios, que de la brava me guardaré yo.

† It was a common superstition in Spain, which is not yet quite eradicated, to believe that those who had the misfortune to be born on Good

“Blessed Saint James be with us,” said Juanillo, “’an I thought ’twere no sin, I should like to see him so as to mark his eyes, that I may know the look of a Zahori.”

As he said these words, Vargas appeared at the door of the kitchen where they sat, and asked abruptly for a mule or horse to convey him to the next post. The sight of his eye, and the sound of his voice, had the same effect upon Master Rock and Juanillo that Cachafuto’s exorcism was said to have produced upon himself; they disappeared—whither, Vargas in vain endeavoured to ascertain; he searched

Friday, were melancholy and spirit-haunted persons. They are called Zahoris, and were supposed to have the peculiar power of seeing through the covering of earth which might have been cast over dead bodies, and so of discovering the hidden victims of assassination.

the inn and the stable, and found both alike uninhabited by man or beast: he called aloud, but could obtain no answer. Vexed and in despair he left the venta, and observed a man mounted on a stout Andaluz gennet, going along the road in a southerly direction; hastening to the point where the two roads joined, he arrived there in time to cross the path of the traveller.

Vargas found that he was a wine merchant of Xeres de la Frontera, returning to that place after a speculating progress through the larger towns of Estremadura; he explained to him that he had great urgency to proceed to Seville, and no means of getting to the next relay of post-horses, but by walking,—a mode ill-suited to his great haste and weakened health. Vargas then proceeded unceremoniously

to request that as his horse was strong, and himself light, he would allow him to make the crupper his saddle until he could procure a saddle of his own to fill upon another animal.

The traveller at first expostulated upon the cruelty of increasing the burthen of his handsome gennet ; but good nature, it seems, preponderated in his disposition, for after short parlance, leave was given, and the stirrup lent, with the assistance of which Vargas seated himself upon the hinder part of the animal, and it proceeded towards Seville at a long walk.

If any of my readers should ever chance to pass from Medellin to Seville, he must pass by Alange ; and if the village called Zarza de Alange, a few hundred yards from the rock, should then exist, as it did in the year 1813, let him take the trouble to in-

quire among the gossips concerning the rock and its castle ; he will there hear that once upon a time an evil spirit, inhabiting the person of a young knight, strangely beset the last residents within its precincts : the individual incidents I will not forestall, as it would be unkindly anticipating the interest of the gossips' story ; but the result was, that being powerfully exorcised by divers priests and friars, sent to Alange from a neighbouring convent, for the express purpose, the demon at length took his departure, another spirit rising out of the earth on a blue horse, behind whom the possessed knight leapt, and the horse flew off like the wind.

Now when this story is told him, if the reader will remember the history of Vargas, and superadd all the probable embellishments which it was

likely to receive from Master Rock then, and succeeding generations, in regular succession, he will probably hit upon a rational foundation for an irrational story.

CHAPTER XVIII.

— To persecute her here to glut his rage,
To heap upon her yet more agony,
And ripen more damnation for himself.

SOUTHEY.

LET us retrograde a little, and pay a visit to the unhappy Cornelia in that dread abode of despair, in which she was left at the end of the 14th chapter. It is not without shuddering that I venture to return thither, but my duty as an historian demands it, and I obey.

Scenes have been acted in the Palace of the Inquisition which, Heaven be praised, cannot be re-acted now; and the possibility of which it may at first perhaps be difficult to conceive, but which, alas, are neither untrue nor

exaggerated. Some of the crimes recorded of the Inquisition even so far exceed the common depth of the depravity of our nature, wretched as it is, that we might be allowed to doubt the best authenticated historian, if there were not existing undeniable indications of their truth, in the convincing remains of that monstrous engine of fanaticism which have been handed down to us. Praised be Providence, by the light which the Reformation has shed over the whole Christian world, either direct or reflected, the growth of religious despotism, which thrives in darkness, has been stunted ; and it is only by the instruments of torture which still exist in the dungeons of the Inquisition, that we are able to form an idea of the magnitude to which the monster had grown during the dark days, in

the same manner that the enormous skeletons which are dug out of the earth can alone present to our minds a conception of the beasts that ravaged the world before the flood.

I have been in Seville, good reader, and I have walked through the palace of the Inquisition there; not indeed that identical one which contained the hapless Cornelia de Bohorquia, for the old Moorish fortification which then bore that name, has been razed to the ground, and smiling orange bowers have grown up in its place. But a more gorgeous palace rose before that fell, and it now stands upon one of the fairest promenades of the beautiful capital of Andalucia—an eye-pleasing building if the horrors within it could be forgotten. I have walked through the halls of this building; I have seen the instruments of

torture: the weights which, when the wretched victim was suspended by his wrists from the vaulted roof, were tied to his feet one by one until they drew his bones out of their sockets: the fatal funnel, contrived with such satanic ingenuity, that, when filled and placed over the mouth of the devoted victim, it inflicted all the agonies of drowning without producing death. What a mind must that man have had who invented this machine! what may be his own torments at this moment! perhaps he is eternally enduring the death pangs of one who is drowning in a lake of fire!

The hall of torture, as it was called, was a very large and lofty apartment, considerably below the level of the ground, vaulted over head, and with walls of extreme thickness, that the dreadful sounds which so often filled

it might not find their way beyond its limits, nor be wasted on ears that would think them unmusical. There were no openings to admit the light, but several blazing torches gave a red glare to the objects which they illuminated. A platform was erected on one side, supporting a table, at which several chairs were placed. Here sat a secretary, and here were the stations of the Inquisitors, and the Bishop or his vicar. It was into this grave of Hope that Cornelia was borne by the alguazils. Her shrieks had continued as long as she had remained sensible of her situation, but nature had at length given way, and she had become a senseless burthen in the arms of her hardened supporters. These men laid her at her length on the floor of the hall of torture, and retired.

While she lay in this state, a door opening upon the platform admitted two persons habited in Inquisitorial robes and caps, who took their seats at the table in silence ; which silence was first broken by that impious invocation of the Spirit of all truth and mercy, with which this part of the Inquisitorial office commenced, and which, if any thing could heighten the enormity of the crime which they were about to perpetuate, raised it to its extremest point of wickedness, by specially calling upon their Maker to witness the act. This invocation was always pronounced by the highest dignity present ; and upon this occasion it was run over by the Archbishop with the rapidity of a paternoster. The secretary had scarcely said the solemn Amen, before his Excellency, with all the impatience of

anticipated revenge, gave his directions in the same creaking sound which he had used in the invocation, for he had but one characteristic tone of voice, which served him alike upon all occasions, from the mumbling of a mass to the caressing of a lap dog,—but one manner of speech alike for a king or a sacristan.

In pity to my readers I must let the curtain fall upon this scene. Suffice it to say, that the miserable lady recovered from her swoon during the preparations which were made for her actual torture. Her eyes opened upon the satanic figures who supported her on each side, and who were covered with black cloth from the top of the head to the ancles, having only two holes made for them to see through. The object immediately before her

was the horrible wooden horse,* which, could she have conceived all the purposes for which it was constructed, would have deprived her of her senses only to look upon it. Fortunately its form conveyed no distinct idea to her mind; but she anticipated enough from the scene which she beheld, to rouse her to madness. Her madness, however, added to its own characteristic

* The *wooden horse* is a bench, made hollow like a trough, so as to contain a man lying upon his back at full length, about the middle of which there is a round bar laid across, upon which the back of the person is placed so that he lies upon the bar instead of being let into the bottom of the trough, with his feet much higher than his head. As he is lying in this posture, his arms, thighs, and shins, are tied round with small cords or strings, which being drawn with screws at proper distances from each other, cut into the very bones, so as to be no longer discerned.

ingenuity, an impulse from her characteristic courage ; the first pointed out to her the means, and the second gave her the power of saving herself from the agonies that awaited her. She had heard that women who were about to become mothers were in all cases exempt from penal inflictions. Casting aside, therefore, all the false delicacy that in less pressing circumstances might have restrained her, she loudly declared that she was a wife, and carried about with her the fruits of her marriage ; and then, with frantic earnestness, she claimed the respite to which her situation entitled her.

The Archbishop's disappointment must remain unexplained, as I trust it is unimaginable to my readers. He felt inclined even to resist the canon, which is express in this case ; but it

was gravely expounded by the Inquisitor, and the matter was set at rest by her being remanded to her prison, where all the privations and cruelties she suffered failed to produce a pang so heart-searching as that inflicted upon the Archbishop by the complicated venom that saturated his diabolical mind. We will leave them both to their misery, and see what has been the result of Meneses' return to Seville.

In the progress of his journey that chivalrous and romantic young man had revolved in his mind all the plans possible and impossible by which Cornelia could be saved, and most of which would have done very well, except that unfortunately they all wanted the connecting link by which they could be applied to the real case. Most of them commenced with, "if

I could get into the palace of the Inquisition, I would do so and so." This *if* recurred so often, that at length he became himself sensible that he was wasting his time and his plans, unless he could give feasibility to this supposition. He therefore wisely turned his thoughts to this one object first; and, not to make the reader wade through all the laborious investigation of possibilities which occupied poor Meneses for many hours, I will briefly relate the means by which he was enabled to effect his purpose at last.

He retired from the heat of the day to a *venta* near the road, about half a day's journey from Seville, and an *alguazil* of the holy tribunal had taken the same shelter a short time before him. Meneses entered into conversation with the man, and found that he was a Valencian, and that he

had been christened Diego. The feeling excited by the term *tocayo*, or namesake, is hardly less warm than that produced by the relationship of *paisano*, or fellow-countryman. The alguazil was attracted to Meneses by both these ties, and the latter did his best to increase the attraction. They pursued their journey together. Meneses represented himself as a soldier, unsuccessful in his hopes of acquiring fortune, and turned upon the world by circumstances to begin life again ; he then naturally led the conversation to the alguazil's employment. His new friend spoke with warmth of it, declaring it to be the high road to fortune, and the pleasantest of the many that led to the same point. A little manœuvring on the part of Meneses soon produced a proposal from the alguazil, that he should enter the same

career, which, after some well managed hesitation and inquiries, Meneses agreed to do upon the strength of a promise that Diego Cachuco would procure him immediate admission as an external alguazil of the Inquisition at Seville, from which, if his conduct should justify his introduction, he might hope to rise to better things.

Preliminaries being thus arranged, the travellers arrived at Seville, where, to shorten the relation of formal steps in the business, it may suffice to say that on the following morning Meneses was sworn into the office of *alguazil de fuera*, or alguazil to be employed in the external duty of the holy tribunal. Several days passed, however, before he was enabled to reap any benefit from his voluntary degradation to this plebeian and un-

popular station. At length, by using considerable tact in the direction of his inquiries, he discovered in the course of conversation with some of the superior alguazils, that a noble lady had been remanded from the hall of torture in consequence of her plea of pregnancy. By comparing dates, and freely construing dark hints, he felt convinced that this lady was no other than Cornelia de Bohorquia; and this conviction was fully confirmed by the reply which he received, to a hazardous question that he ventured to put to the medical attendant of the palace, when he chanced to be alone with him in the outer quadrangle.

“Is Doña Cornelia de Bohorquia likely soon to add to the population of the palace?” asked Meneses.

“Not for these four months,” replied

the doctor, whose profession did not raise him above the rank of the alguazil, and who was thrown off his guard by the decided tone of previous information which he assumed. Meneses wisely held his tongue, lest any further interrogation might awaken suspicion. He was satisfied with this confirmation of his hopes, and he pursued the subject no further.

This point being settled, and time being thus gained, the next thing to do was to bring Vargas to Seville, and to form some plan for the rescue of Cornelia. On the evening of his arrival in Seville, Meneses had been closeted all night with the miserable Marquis of Bohorquia, to whom he had recounted at large the result of his journey. The old man was thrown into paroxysms of grief and indignation at all that he heard, and was entirely deprived of

the power of deciding how to act in the difficult situation in which he was placed. The stay, the prop on which he had so long leaned for support and direction in all his affairs, could now no longer be resorted to. The Archbishop, his counsellor, his confessor, his father, his friend, could no longer be consulted, and he felt like a man who having long been unable to walk without crutches, loses them at the moment that his house is on fire, peremptorily called upon to move without having the power. The only effort he made like action was to entreat that Vargas might be sent for.

This Meneses promised should be done, but how to perform his promise safely was the question. To write this desire by the common conveyance would be dangerous in the existing state of affairs; and he delayed,

in the hopes that some better opportunity might occur. Day past after day, and still no plan suggested itself. Meneses was employed on many distressing and diabolical expeditions; he saw no progress making towards his object; he began to be cured of his romance, and to be heartily tired of his new character.

Just as his courage, which would have been equal to any active danger, was beginning to fail under the painful incapacity of a tedious and harassing probation, he was overjoyed at receiving a command to form one of a party which was to arrest a lady travelling from Truxillo to Portugal, whom they expected to overtake somewhere near Medellin. The idea of either being able to communicate with Vargas, or to find certain means of communication in passing by the very spot where

he was, gave him a new impulse, and he accordingly prepared the letter, the delivery of which to Vargas was recorded in the last chapter.

In the course of this journey, Meneses found reason to think that the evident reluctance of his manner in the discharge of his duty for the last few days, had excited something like suspicion concerning him, and he forced himself to double alacrity and diligence, that he might eradicate those seeds so dangerous when once sown in Inquisitorial minds. They travelled after sunset, and a spy from Medellin met them about midnight, a short league from Alange, giving them information that the object of their pursuit had stopped at the venta of the Peña for the night. Thither, therefore, the alguazils directed their course; but before I

bring them to the place, I must refer the reader to the 15th chapter, and explain more particularly the proceedings of Master Rock on the eventful night, the circumstances of which are recorded in that chapter.

Intent upon obtaining payment for the whole of the beds in his long gallery, of which his guests occupied but two, Master Rock still remembered all that he himself had said concerning the nobility, which alone was admitted to repose on those couches; and he saw no means of procuring his money, and preserving his consistency, except by finding fit and proper representatives of grandees, to prevent the admission of whom into their apartment for the night, he had no doubt but the Señoras would agree to his own terms. He had no very extensive field for choice of persons to act

his farce, and he hastened forthwith to the castle, where three of the idle retainers of the Count offered their services to perform the characters of titled travellers, while as many others as were wanted came forward to fill up the figurante parts. A serious obstacle presented itself:—it would be evidently in vain to endeavour to pass themselves off to the ladies for men of rank, while their apparel so distinctly declared them to be in service; this too would be more important in Spain than in England, for in the former country the distinctions of dress have been always more striking and characteristic than in the latter.

The daring genius of Master Rock soon overcame this difficulty. The principal inhabitants of the fortress were all fast asleep; the inferior ones had been roused from their slumbers to

enter into the plan. The clothes of Don Felix, of Vargas, and of the Count himself, were dexterously taken away from their apartments, together with the rapier of each ; and in these borrowed habiliments the performers began their masquerade ;—how they supported their several characters, and how the play was interrupted, has already been related. It remains only to account for the conveyance of Meneses' letter.

The good fortune of Meneses was beyond all his hopes, when he found himself actually at the venta of Alange ; yet still much remained to be done : he was sensible that he was *en surveillance* from his companions, and he had good reason to believe that Master Rock was a rogue ; who to trust, therefore, was the difficulty. He was pleased at the post which was

allotted him during the arrest,—to remain at the head of the ladder, because it placed him for a moment out of sight of the alguazils. During that moment he followed the innkeeper and the pretended nobleman into the little room, intending to entrust one of them with the letter ; but the sight of his own sword changed his plan, and made him adopt that which has been related. He knew that the sword must belong to Vargas, however it got there ; and putting out the light, therefore, lest Master Rock should know what he was doing, he folded the letter round the blade, trusting to the good angel who had conducted him there to take it to the person for whom it was intended. Having accomplished this, he regained his post before his companions came forth with their wretched vic-

tim, and he returned to Seville escorting the prisoner.

When the alguazils had disappeared, Master Rock was immediately deserted by his patrician friends, and their followers. Each man made his escape, as if he were the individual object of the Inquisitorial visit; while the Conde de Puño-en-rostro, who had worn the doublet of Vargas, left all his tokens of nobility in the hands of the innkeeper, having been more specially alarmed than the others by the terrifying conference with Meneses. The Duque de Híjar had been the borrower of the Count's apparel, and he took care safely to return it by the dawn of day; the Marques de Villamierda had not been the actual purveyor of his own clothes; and in the morning he took them to the apartment of Vargas instead of that of

Don Felix, from which they had been taken; while Master Rock, in his early visit of restitution, meeting Don Felix without a doublet was too anxious to execute the commission he had received, to inquire particularly whether the apparel he bore belonged to one or to the other of the visitors at the castle.

And thus having unravelled all the mystery that attends the delivery of this important letter, let us return to Vargas, who had already begun his journey towards Seville.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Sabbath comes, a day of blessed rest ;

What hallows it upon this Christian shore ?

Lo ! it is sacred to a solemn feast :

Hark ! heard you not the forest monarch's
roar ?

BYRON.

IN the course of the ride from Alange to the next relay of post-horses, Vargas found it quite impossible to repress the conversation of his good-natured companion ; indeed, to attempt it would have been ungrateful, as well as impolitic, and Vargas therefore contented himself with making his own answers as short as he could, and as unlikely to produce other questions.

“ You will make stay at Llerena, doubtless ? ” said the traveller.

“Not an hour,” replied Vargas.

“Not stay at Llerena, and arrive there on the vigil of Saint Mark! Why, friend, thy footmark will be known amidst the million that figure the king’s highway, by its being the only one with the heel to the town.”

Vargas was silent.

“Perhaps you never were in Estremadura before, and did not know of the miracle of Saint Mark.”

“I have often heard the story of the Bull of Saint Mark,” said Vargas.

“And now the saint affords you an opportunity of witnessing it, and no doubt it will wonderfully increase your veneration for him.”

“No doubt,” echoed Vargas.

“Why, ’tis the head of the year with the people in these parts; and not a few come from other parts, to see the Bull, and to worship the saint.

Many a year have I come from Xeres to Merida, time gone by, when 'twas best kept there; but now Llerena is most favoured as all the world acknowledge."

In spite of the little encouragement which he received from Vargas, the traveller went on dilating upon the pleasure he anticipated in being present at the festival of Saint Mark, in so highly favoured a town as Llerena, in which the evangelist performed his annual miracle in a more clever manner than in any other of the many places in Estremadura where he was particularly venerated. Vargas rejoiced heartily when he no longer needed the assistance of his good horse. He thanked him for that which he had afforded him so far, but he firmly refused to wait until the animal which he had so largely con-

tributed to fatigue, should be sufficiently refreshed to pursue the journey; and his thanks consequently lost all their value to the offended wine-merchant, when, coupled with this uncivil and ungrateful refusal to bear him company, merely to gain the advance of an hour or two.

The festival so highly spoken of by the traveller, deserves some notice from the reader, both as an historical fact of extraordinary paganism, and from the conspicuous part which Vargas afterwards took in the rite. The day of St. Mark was celebrated with great devotion in many towns and villages of Estremadura, which devotion was principally excited, or considerably increased, by a miracle which yearly took place in all the towns where it was so celebrated. On the vigil of the feast, the curate of the parish,

properly apparelled and accompanied, went to the nearest herd of cattle, and pointing out a bull from amongst them, he gave it the name of the saint; and calling it by its new and christian appellation, it instantly became as tame and domesticated as a lamb, following him to the church, where it remained while the mass was saying, and allowing women and children to decorate its horns with the garlands and little images which were abundantly offered by the devout worshippers of Saint Mark. If perchance the bull should prove refractory, or should refuse to obey the curate's call, the unhappy priest was immediately convicted in the minds of the people of being in the commission of some mortal sin, and shunned accordingly.

Vespers being performed, the priest led the canonised bull along

the streets of the town, and even into the patios or inner quadrangles of the principal houses. If the animal should happen to show a disposition not to enter into any one of the houses where the priest wished to lead him, it was immediately assumed by these heathen people, either that evil events were about to happen to the inhabitants of the ill-fated abode, or that some great sinner or wicked heretic resided there. After his evening's perambulation, the sacred bull passed the night under the care of the curate, and in the morning assisted at the ceremony of high mass in the church, where the same adornments and offerings took place as on the evening before. As soon as the office was finished, the miraculous interposition ceased, the bull became unsanctified; and, recovering all its natural ferocity, off it bounded to the

herd again, bellowing, pawing, and giving all other indications of a real *taurine* disposition.

Now really I think it necessary, before I proceed in my relation of what occurred to Vargas at Llerena during this miraculous ceremony, to run the risk of being thought prosing by the reader, that I may defend myself from the charge of absurdity, misrepresentation, and exaggeration, which it is more than probable that he has brought against me in his mind. Good reader, I have committed no anachronism,—I have not mistaken a pagan sacrifice in the second century before our Saviour for a Christian ceremony in the 16th century after His birth. Neither have I been guilty in the least degree of misrepresentation or exaggeration: I will put in a note (not to interrupt those who do not

like to read hard names), references to certain grave authors who have written fully on the subject, describing minutely every part of the festival, and the usual performance of the miracle. Justice, however, requires that I should also state, that pope Clement VIII. who sat in St. Peter's chair in the year 1594 (after Vargas was at Llerena), directed a bull to the Bishop of the diocese upon the subject, condemning the ceremony, and desiring that it might be discontinued. It was not, however, given up until the beginning of the 18th century, more than a hundred years afterwards, as plainly appears from good father Feyjoo's curious and interesting examination of the subject in his *Teatro Critico*, and his *Cartas Eruditas*.* This

* The authors to whom I allude are the Jesuit Carlos Casnedi, in the 5th volume of his "Cri-

was an extraordinary contest between the Pope's bull and St. Mark's bull; and it must be allowed that the bull of St. Mark showed remarkable courage in maintaining his ground for a whole century, against the bull of St. Peter.

Having said thus much, to secure my character from the suspicion of being tinctured with a traveller's talent, I will leave my industrious readers to examine my authorities, promising them beforehand that their reward will amply recompense the trouble; and my indolent readers to

sis Theologica," disp. 13 lect. 1. No. 35. Juan de Santo Thoma. vol. 6, quest. 7. The Fathers of Salamanca, vol. 5. Curs. Moral. tract. 21. 5 cap. 11: Thomas Hurtado, Resol. Moral. vol. 1. Tract. 5. cap. 4: and most particularly and entertainingly Father Feyjoo who wrote between the years 1730 and 1740. Teatro. Crit. vol. 7. dis. 8. Cart. Erud. vol. 5. Cart. 15.

take my correctness for granted, assuring them that they may do so with safety ; and I will give both descriptions of readers a further illustration of the custom to which I have alluded, by carrying them with Vargas to Llerena, where he arrived shortly after noon, upon an ambling Andalusian post-horse, in a hot day, the vigil of the festival of St. Mark.

Indeed the heat was so overpowering, and his debilitated frame had been so wearied in the course of his journey, that he felt it absolutely necessary to take some repose. The bustle and crowded state of Llerena, however, afforded him but little prospect of a quiet hour of siesta ; and his repugnance to the thought of remaining longer than he could possibly help, amidst the haunts of gaiety, bigotry, and folly, had determined him not to

yield to his increasing fatigue, but to pursue his journey at all events to the next venta, which he might probably find deserted, as its inhabitants would most likely join the devotional throng at the altar of St. Mark.

His intention was, however, altered upon finding that the approach to Llerena was through a tolerably thick wood, the shelter of which seemed to promise security at once from the rays of the sun and the intrusion of the world. Discharging his horse and guide, therefore, he desired him to take his valise to the post-house, where he would claim it in a short time ; and then, diving into the recesses of the wood, he sought out a convenient spot where he might take his rest. He was prevented from choosing any of the numerous couches

which presented themselves under the tent-like trees that surrounded him, by the number of cattle which crossed his path in small groups, driven by the heat of the sun from the open pasture into the cooler retreats of the wood. As the intrusion of these would be as effectual to prevent his sleep as that of the crowd in Llerena, he endeavoured, by going further into the wood, to find some safer shelter, and he was not disappointed. The ground, which had been gradually rising, now became more hilly, and on the side of a little steep ascent there appeared a grotto, partly natural and partly artificial, into which he immediately entered. The grotto, which was wide at its opening, narrowed into a smaller path, but as it became perfectly dark, and as Vargas had more

weariness than curiosity, he proceeded not far, but arranging himself for rest upon the ground, he soon fell fast asleep.

From this refreshing and necessary slumber, he was awakened in an extremely unpleasant manner by the furious entrance of a bull into the grotto, not as having strayed there of its own accord, but evidently angered by pursuit. Vargas thought that he could not be safer than at his full length, and particularly as he was too far down the dark part of the grotto to be a striking object to the animal; he, therefore, determined to remain quiet until he should be more closely pressed. Two men appeared at the mouth of the grotto peeping in cautiously.

“By St. Mark,” said the first, “he

has given us a run. If you had taken my advice, and followed the bald-faced one, we should have had him here an hour ago."

"Marry—heed it not, man," replied his companion, "but make the best on't now; we have saved father Jerome from mortal sin, however;" and they both laughed.

"Halloo not till you are out of the wood, Pedro," said the first speaker. "The dull beast drinketh not, and the curate may be a rare sinner yet."

The bull, after snuffing some time in different parts of the grotto, at length put his nose into a small trough which had been placed on the ground, and drank freely of its contents.

"By the mass thou liest," said Pedro triumphantly, "the beast drinketh and belieth the proverb, 'as

much wine as a king, as much water as an ox;’ * and in time hath he drank, seeing that the siesta hour is well nigh spent;” and the men boldly entered the grotto.

The effect of the wine was almost immediate upon the bull, he became stupified, and allowed the men to approach him without the slightest resistance. As a further means of securing the tractableness of the animal, they proceeded to tie a piece of fine catgut tightly round his leg, just above the knee, and then they led him quietly by the very horns, to the mouth of the grotto, where, directing their course towards a herd close by, they drove him into the midst of

* *Vino como rey, agua como buey*; a proverb by the way, which speaks well for the sobriety of the Spaniards.

it. Vargas arose and followed them at a little distance, from whence he observed that one of the men remained near the herd while the other went off towards the town.

Vargas had heard so many details of the miracle of St. Mark from the good-natured wine-merchant of Xeres, and from the *mozos de posta*, that he easily conjectured that he had now witnessed the preparation for that mysterious event ; and, forcibly struck by the dreadful state of mental slavery which it evinced in the people, and still more so by the blasphemous wickedness which it proved in the priesthood, he could not forbear wishing to see how both would be led by these different powers. He had not long to wait ;—in a short time the noise of an approaching crowd was heard : music

and singing, and loud voices. A vast concourse of people appeared through the trees, drest out in all the gala which a whole year's pinching could provide. At the head walked a priest, richly apparelled, and supported on either side by two Dominican friars, there being a considerable Dominican convent in the town; before them walked boys in surplices with censers, and behind them was a procession of friars and other religious persons.

When this assemblage approached the herd, the frightened animals turned to fly, but this was prevented by a detachment from the main mob, which, having got round them, arrested their flight. Silence was now proclaimed by the ringing of a bell; and there was an immediate suspension of all the other less sacred noises which had before filled the air. Not a sound was

now heard, until, after a proper pause, the priest's voice gave utterance to the following invocation.

“ Blessed bull, honoured above thy kind by divine permission, and for the glory of the ever-to-be-venerated Evangelist, St. Mark! I call thee by his all-sanctified name, and invite thee to be present at the sacred functions to be performed this evening and to-morrow in his honour.”

At these words a shout was set up by the surrounding crowd, loud enough to frighten all the bulls in Estremadura. The scared herd instantly scampered off, and were not prevented from so doing this time as they had been before; but, bounding away, they left their besotted companion, prevented from making his escape both by the giddiness in his head, and the pain occasioned by the invi-

sible ligature round the muscle of his leg. Overjoyed at this manifest miracle, the people rushed forward carrying the priest and the procession before them by their impulse. Every one strove to be foremost in paying honour to the sacred bull; flowers and little paper ornaments were thrown upon him in profusion, and the air rung with the praise of St. Mark. Meantime the attendants of the curate, having thrown a small string round the horns of the animal, led him away towards the town, surrounded everywhere by echoing exclamations of conviction and delight. "See, the lion is led by a ribband!" "A child may play with its horns!" "The spirit of the saint is surely in him." While the softer feelings of the female part of the crowd found a more characteristic mode of expression, in

applying all manner of tender epithets to the huge beast, always coupling them with the name Marcos, in some of its various forms of diminution; "oh, gentle Marcitos!" "beautiful Marcetillos!" "*regaladissimo Marcitos!*" "*ay que angel de toro!*"—"what an angel of a bull!" &c. &c.

To such of my readers as have had the satisfaction of seeing Rafaael's Cartoons at Hampton-Court, it will be unnecessary to give any further description of the procession of the bull of St. Mark into the city of Llerena, than to call to their remembrance the painting there of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, in which the principal group of plebeian and unintellectual faces, crowding round the bull decorated for sacrifice, may be considered an exact representation of this truly pagan scene. Vargas looked on with pity, with contempt,

and with horror. All that the venerable Master Walker, his English guide and director, had said, whilst drawing a comparison between pagan Rome and papal Rome, came forcibly to his mind, and its application to the present ceremony brought with it strong and overwhelming conviction.

Vargas followed the multitude into the town, influenced, however, by a different kind of curiosity from that which acted upon the gay slaves of bigotry, who hugged their chains, and laughed at their own mental blindness. *They* went from the idiot curiosity of darkened minds to see the spiritualised bull bow at the altar of St. Mark. *He* followed from the painful desire to witness how far the well-grounded security of these legerdemain priests would induce them to insult the degraded minds of their fellow-men,

how far their daring impiety and practical unbelief would lead them to profane the Divine presence in his sacred temple, and to outrage decency and common sense in the profanation.—His was, perhaps, the only brow that bore the impress of melancholy, amongst the many that poured along the streets of Llerena, occupying their breadth with a surface of heads, as if an enormous cart-load of melons had been emptied into the opening space. The priest and the procession reached the temple, a term that I prefer to any that can apply to an edifice exclusively Christian, which it must be allowed would be a misnomer in the present instance ; but the more general application of the word Temple is pagan, while its real signification renders it inoffensive for papal use. The besotted quadruped, and the

more besotted bipeds, entered the temple, and stood in the sacred place alike for the purposes of religion. Little waxen images, and some small silver coins and relics, were presented to the animal, and hung upon its horns by children placed there on purpose to display his extreme tameness. A girl, not ten years old, appeared to hold him by having in her hands the very slight cord which alone was tied to his horns, but in fact his situation rendered it impossible that he should move, for his hinder parts rested against one of the principal pillars of the temple ; whilst before him and on all sides was such a dazzling and moving scene close to his head, as would have been enough to have rendered him giddy, even if the fumes of the wine had been nugatory.

Mass was said, and Vargas could

hardly believe that he heard nothing of the names of Janus and Vesta, although the language spoken at the altar, as well as all that he saw, seemed to promise it. When the sacred elements were consecrated, and the priest raised the holy chalice from the altar, Vargas almost expected that the *Libatio* would follow, and thought to see the contents poured between the animal's horns.* At the ringing of the little bell, he fancied he heard the piping of the Tubicines; but rather than obey the summons and prostrate himself after the heathen rites that he had witnessed, he forced himself through the crowd of people who were endeavouring to kneel, and got into the transept of the church, from

* Ipsa tenens dextrâ pateram pulcherrima Dido,
Candentis vaccæ media inter cornua fundit.

Vir. Æn. 4, v. 60.

whence he made his way into the street.

Except in the immediate vicinity of the church, where the excess of its contents were lingering, Vargas found no one in the streets: all were drawn to one centre, and at a distance from it the houses seemed deserted. He wandered on in the hope of finding some one to direct him to the post-house; but not seeing any one, he continued to parade the town, solitarily pondering upon the disgraceful paganism of the scene he had just witnessed. As he paid little attention to the direction in which he proceeded, he was not aware that he had been walking in a circle, until he arrived at the same street from which he had begun his perambulations. As he now re-entered it, the open gates of the temple began to send forth the

idolatrous crowd, the ceremony having been finished at the altar, and the duty of the augurs being now about to commence. It happened that almost at the same instant that the people began to press forward, Vargas's friend, the wine-merchant of Xeres, made his appearance by an intersecting street, and both Vargas and his travelling companion were soon surrounded by the eddying torrent that rushed upon them. The wine-merchant was covered with ribbands, points, and slashes, and all his gay dress was surmounted by a very large flowing red silk cloak, called a *coro cloak*. His horse's tail was tightly bound with red ribbands, and the mane was neatly plaited, having a small round bell suspended from each plait. The tout ensemble was the acme of elegance in a person of that class of society, and

procured for the merchant the appellation of *curutaco*, from those who observed him then; while now-a-days we should remark of it familiarly that it was a *dashing* turn out.

The *curutaco* was the only person mounted, and his situation was therefore neither pleasant to himself, nor convenient to those who were forced, in spite of themselves, to come in contact with the horse. As those persons who were before the horse's eyes, or rather who were under his nose, were objects of considerable alarm to the animal, he commenced a retrograde movement, which was still more alarming to those who were behind him. The rider had originally endeavoured to get out of the way; and under the fallacious imagination that the horse's nature would induce him to make progress rather in the direc-

tion of his head than that of his tail, he had turned away from the church. The feelings of fear which accompanied the horse's inverted motion extended not far into the crowd, and those who were beyond their influence were excited by strong feelings of mirth. In this situation, like a weak man rowing against a strong tide, and not looking the way that he was going, the curutaco found himself suddenly arrested by his horse's buttocks having come in contact with the pendant horns of the bull of St. Mark. As these two unnatural animals approached each other, the people shouted, the women screamed, the priests got out of the way of the heels of the horse, and left the miserable bull more dizzy and drunken than ever, from the hubbub which surrounded him. The noise frightened the horse still more,

and he continued to retreat until finding resistance from behind, he wickedly, irreverently, and heretically, applied his hinder hoofs to the dejected front of St. Mark, and that by no means in the manner of a caress, but exceedingly resembling the application made by the hammer of an English butcher to the skull of a condemned ox.

So sacrilegious an outrage overcame at once all feelings of fear in the infatuated people; they rushed in upon the bewildered horse, and the bedizened rider, who, having already lost his balance by the repeated elevations of his seat behind, was very speedily unhorsed; the horse was seized by the bridle, and forcibly led away; the curutaco, in spite of his coro cloak, puffed slashes, and pointed sleeves, was rolled in the dust, suf-

fering all the agony which a beau can suffer when his best birth-day suit is ignominiously made acquainted with the dirt ; for of his personal sufferings, those that related to his dress were the greatest. Opprobrious epithets were poured on him from all sides,—“ sacrilegious ;” “ Saracen ;” “ infidel ;” “ Moor ;” and the essence of all expressed in “ heretic,” to which a more venomous idea is attached by a Spaniard, than to any of the terms which might otherwise be considered synonymous to it.

During the progress of this interruption to the rites of the day, Vargas had obtained a situation elevated above the crowd, by standing upon a *polletillo*, or small stone seat, with which the porches in the south of Spain are generally flanked. This happened to be nearly opposite to the

spot where the good-natured traveller was receiving such ill-treatment, and Vargas, whose anger had long been rising, felt called upon to use his best endeavour to assist the poor fellow who had so kindly assisted him at his need. How to do this was the point, and his increasing indignation overcame the wiser dictates of his prudence, and suggested the most injudicious course he could have adopted. Raising his voice to the strongest pitch, he drew the attention of all upon him, and astonished them into silence by exclaiming “ Unhappy heathens ! worshippers of Baal ! where does your miserable folly and blindness lead you ? Touch not the unoffending man—what is his crime ? why load him with such opprobrious epithets ? It is you who are heretics, not he, disgracing your religion, by such impious and profane

ceremonies. The bull is not domesticated but drunken ; stupified with the fumes of wine, and tamed by torture." Vargas's last words were lost in the clamours of the people, and the curses of the priests : a hundred zealous Estremeñas rushed towards him, and this successful diversion in favour of his acquaintance would in all probability have been fatal to himself, if the danger had not been averted in a manner much more miraculous than that in which the bull's ferocity had been subdued.

I believe I have already stated that all the lower windows of the houses in Spain are secured by projecting iron bars, rather railwork than grating, as there are many placed perpendicularly, and but one or two horizontally. This railwork, called in Spanish a *reja* (and I shall take the

liberty of anglicising the word for the sake of brevity), stands round the windows in the same manner that a high fender does round a fire, and is fixed into the wall. Now there was an open window and, of course, a *reja*, immediately above the seat upon which Vargas stood. A number of people had supported themselves by the *reja*, that they might look over the heads of those around them, to see what was going on. Loosened by their weight, the whole frame of the iron work gave way at the very moment that the charge against Vargas was about to be made. The confusion which ensued was favourable to the escape of the heretical orator, and the open window afforded the means. Leaping into the undefended chasm, he hastily fastened the wooden shutters of the window, (for glass was more

uncommon in those days than in these, rare as it is now, except in great towns) and thus obtained for himself a temporary shelter from the storm that he had raised.

But there was no time to be lost ; like an unskilful magician, he had pronounced the spell, but was unable to dissolve it ; he could not dismiss the powerful spirit that he had invoked. Running through the apartment into which he had intruded, he took the precaution to turn the key which he found in the lock, when he left it, as a retreating general throws down an abatis on the road behind him to delay the enemy's march, if it be only for five minutes. Crossing the patio, he hastened up the stairs that presented themselves, intending to get upon the roof, which he considered as his only chance of escape. The

azoteas, or roofs, in the south of Spain, are all flat, and communicate with each other, having generally, no other division than a very low wall. Death to all his hope! the azotea door was closed, locked, and double locked. In his moment of consideration he turned round, and, casting his eyes upon a door that opened upon the corridor where he was standing, and which was ajar, he perceived through the aperture a lady enter the room in much hurry and confusion, by means of a concealed door under the tapestry with which the room was hung. While she was carefully closing this, Vargas boldly entered, and walked at once up to the spot that she had just left. The lady uttered a faint scream, and fell down upon her knees, while Vargas in silence attempted to re-open the door, but finding himself

unequal to the task, he assumed the courtesy which he had before postponed, and telling the lady simply that he was in great danger, he implored her to conceal him in the private room.

The Señora persisted that there was no room behind the tapestry, but as Vargas was positive as to the fact, and peremptory in his demand to be admitted and concealed, she at length confessed that it was her private oratory, a spot unknown to any living creature.

“The better fitted for my purpose of concealment, Señora,” said Vargas.

“Not even my father confessor has ever been admitted there, good Señor.”

“So much the better, madam,” replied Vargas. “It is safe even from the chance of the *sigillum confessionis* being broken.”

The irritated and zealous populace had quickly followed Vargas through the window, and almost as quickly removed the obstruction of his abatis; the noise of their ascent up the stairs was now heard, and his safety depended upon the instant decision of the lady: fortunately her fears were acted upon by the noise, and with a nervous trepidation she touched the spring of the door, and admitted Vargas, hastily reclosing it when he had entered.

Before I proceed any further, it may be necessary to describe more particularly the situation of the house where Vargas had taken refuge. It stood in contact with the Dominican convent which I have before mentioned in this chapter; and its appearance was that of the residence of a person in easy circumstances, if not

in affluence. The particular hiding place of the fugitive was a small but snug apartment having no window, but Vargas found a lamp burning, which rendered other light unnecessary. The whole arrangement of the closet would not certainly have bespoke it at once for an oratory, but neither was the purpose to which it might be commonly applied very definable. The only implements of the Romish religion which it contained were not such as sufficiently to entitle it to the name which the lady had given it. There was no altar nor any crucifix, except a very small one surmounting a receptacle for holy water, not much larger than a thimble, the whole being one of those common apparatuses which are suspended at the head of nine hundred and ninety-nine beds in a thousand in Spain, in

the same manner and about the same size as a watch pocket is in England. This, and a Dominican frock and cord, which lay upon a chair, were the only appendages of religion in the room. The latter article struck Vargas as being unusual in a lady's oratory, and he bethought him that by the situation of the room and the line of the wall of the house, he must be close to the Dominican convent, or rather actually within that building. He had not, however, time to pursue the speculations to which this discovery gave rise, for his attention was forcibly drawn to what was passing in the room he had just left.

The people had at first passed by the door, and run to that which led to the roof, but finding that he had not escaped that way, they began to search the house, and almost imme-

diately rushed into the presence of the trembling lady. "Here he is,"—"he must be here,"—"he is not down stairs,"—"I heard a door shut here,"—"the villain,"—"the heretic,"—"the fiend,"—"the madman,"—and as many other epithets as there were voices were echoed all over the apartment. The lady could reply nothing to the many questions that were put to her; the internal and external confusion which she experienced effectually prevented her. At length one person who seemed to direct the crowd with that sort of spontaneous authority which is successfully assumed by every self-constituted leader of a popular tumult, imposed an intermitting silence on the assembly; or rather he altered the character of this mob-music from the prolonged discords that ran into each other, and

kept up a continuous sound, to the stuccatoed notes that filled up the same time, but left a kind of pause between each. In these pauses the before-mentioned leader managed to cross-examine the Señora.

Her replies were given with so much perturbation, and so little art, that Vargas, who was attentively listening, began to be alarmed lest she should admit his pursuers as easily as she had admitted him. To prepare against such an event, he looked round for means of further escape, and upon closer inspection discovered that opposite to the door by which he had entered there was another very neatly constructed, and very closely shut, in a manner which rendered it perfectly impassable. As, however, the impatience of the people was again expressed in a less stuccatoed way, and

the nerves of the lady began to fail, Vargas set his wits to work, and taking up the Dominican friar's habit, he put it on, as the best protection which his present situation afforded. Having done this he again applied his ear to the door.

“How comes it then that so many say they heard a door bang, Señora?” asked the leader.

“I heard it,”—“and I,”—“and so did I,” said a dozen voices.

“Holy Mary, mother!” exclaimed the lady, “what can I say, you see there are no means of egress here but by the corridor and the alcova.”

“Room for old Juan Sotillo, the carpenter,” cried the people at the door; for the matter in discussion had been handed down stairs; “room for Sotillo, who has something to say there.”

An old man was with difficulty forced into the saloon, and having got up to where the lady stood, Vargas heard him deliver these appalling words, "If he that made a door, can't find a door, why what a fool he must be. No offence, Señora, but I presume that for the good of the Faith, I may loose my tongue, when, as I was told, 'twas only for the good of the Faith that 'twas bound. No one can say 'tis fitting that a heretic should find shelter in a Dominican convent; and if the holy brothers condemn me for telling the secret, they'll absolve me for securing the sinner:" then, turning to the crowd, he continued, "friends, you are all paying my work a great compliment, for you must know that, some years ago, I contrived a door in this room on purpose for nobody to see it, and by St. Mark

but I've done it well, as you yourselves do and shall testify."

The lady fell into strong hysteric fits, but nobody cared for the lady, for every body was anxiously looking towards the carpenter, who, to Vargas's great dismay, came strait to the closet, withdrew the tapestry, touched the spring, and opened the door.

From the first speech of the carpenter, Vargas had anticipated this, and the few minutes which elapsed before the discovery, had given him time to make up his mind as to what he had to do. He threw the cowl forward over his face and, taking the bed-crucifix in his hand, he held it devoutly up to his breast. Thus prepared, the moment the door was opened he walked forth steadily and deliberately—the people made way at his approach, and he passed on.

At first astonishment kept them for a moment silent, but almost immediately bursts of laughter rang from every corner of the room. The current of popular feeling was changed; in the first place inactive delay has a direct tendency to reduce a strong excitement in a crowd; their minds had besides been diverted by curiosity, which prepared them to fall by an easy gradation into mirth, at the expense of the fainting lady; and, as even the most bigotted people are not insensible to the pleasure of a joke at their tyrant priests, so this unexpected appearance of a Dominican friar carefully secreted in a lady's chamber, lost none of its mirth-exciting power from the reverence due to the habit, which, on the contrary, made it an infinitely more piquant jest.

Under the protection of his habit,

his apparent humility, and devotion, Vargas passed without difficulty into the open air, and from thence into the open fields, where, not looking back, nor even giving himself time to think of the lady and her fits, of the priests and their bull, nor of the wine-merchant and his horse, he made the best of his way in a strait direction across vineyards, orange groves, and corn-fields, returning hearty thanks for his power of running in a whole skin.*

* The unfortunate Solano, governor of Cadiz, having been secreted in the house of a friend in a similar closet to that above described, was discovered exactly in the manner that Vargas was ; the carpenter who made the secret door being accidentally amongst the crowd in the house searching for him. Solano was taken out and dragged along the streets by his legs, until his head was literally beaten to pieces. This happened whilst I was at Cadiz. C. V.

CHAPTER XX.

Marry, man, 'tis the very core of the miracle, that the fat friar came hither 'twixt the wings of a butterfly, and held fast by the horns, lest he should tumble the Icarian somerset. Oh ! 'twas rare posting, for his painted gennet covered a league in the life of a lightning flash.

THE MENDICANT.

WITH the best speed that his fright and his frock would permit, Vargas hurried over every obstacle, taking care only to avoid the main road and to keep a southerly direction. He cast no look behind, and scarcely a thought upon his valise, with which he had parted never to meet again ; its contents were trifling, and would scarcely outweigh in value the frock for which he had exchanged it, which was almost new.

The valuable part of his property, that is, the good doubloons, he carried about him in a leathern girdle after the manner of all travellers in Spain, ancient and modern. One end of the Sierra Morena lay between him and Seville, and his path already began to ascend one of the many ramifications that stretch out their great arms from the principal chain of mountains. His mind dwelt for some time upon the extraordinary instance of credulity, bigotry, and blindness, that he had just witnessed, and being fully aware of the unrestrained madness of an excited populace, he thought upon his escape from their fury with gratitude and wonder. As this train of ideas was gradually exhausted he became sensible of fatigue, and his besetting thoughts began to return like the vulture of Prometheus to its eternal

work. He had reached a little river called the Viar at a spot not far from its place of birth, and having drank freely of its cool current, he sat down upon an elevated situation near its banks.

The prospect from hence allayed for a season the sense both of his fatigue and of his misfortunes. The rising branches of the vast Sierra lay before him, and the directions of several were traceable until they formed part of the maternal mass from whence they sprung; whilst the deep intervals that gave them their ramifying character, not being now lighted by the rays of the sun, which were intercepted by the Sierra, suggested the ideas of fathomless chasms, or the craters of central caverns. The mist of evening hung over the whole scene, and equalised in appearance the light foliage of the cork tree with the

broad leaves of the chesnut. This was not yet the effect of twilight, for beyond the Sierra the sun was still visible and splendid, and the shadow of the intervening screen scarcely extended to the spot where Vargas lay, but the general result was cool and refreshing after the glare and the sultry-ness of the July sun.

Vargas felt so much relief from the calm which this scene inspired, when opposed to the confusion and danger from which he had escaped, that he did not attempt to resist the inclination to sleep which grew upon him. The great fatigue which he had undergone, from which he had been but partially refreshed by his short slumber in the grotto of the bull of St. Mark, and his subsequent exertions, rendered it absolutely necessary that he should take rest, and although he saw a

small village at some distance further, he felt no desire to seek a shelter there; but, satisfying himself with the situation he had chosen, sleep soon overpowered him.

The sun had carried day with him round the greater part of the globe, and his earliest rays were swallowing up imperceptibly the stars of the lesser magnitude in the east, before Vargas awoke. He arose considerably refreshed both in mind and body by his bivouack. The rippling current of the Viar afforded him still further refreshment, both in the way of toilet and of breakfast: to complete the latter, a crust of bread only was wanting, which he purposed to procure at the first cottage. To offer a short but earnest petition to the throne of Grace for support and assistance during the day, to himself and to her for whom

he lived, was all that now delayed his journey; and this being performed, he set forward, determining to take advantage of the bigotry of the people for his security in his future progress. To this end he continued to wear the Dominican habit, which he had so strangely become possessed of; and thus attired, he took a direction a little to the westward, that he might double a large mediterranean promontory which projected like a gigantic buttress from the wall of mountain before him.

That he might do this the more easily he forded the Viar, and kept along its current upwards for a considerable way until the day was broad, and the sun had acquired power. He then determined to apply for some fruit and bread at the very first abode he should find, and he was not long in

reaching a place likely to supply his wants. The village of Montemolin lay before him, a collection of clean decent cottages encircling one large building, which was no other than the hereditary palace of the Marquises of Montemolin. A broad open way led directly to the gates of the palace, and for some distance previously to entering the village the approach was through a handsome and lofty avenue of chesnut trees, which gave a vista-like appearance to the palace, and rendered the whole spot picturesque.

Vargas had been following a sheep tract along the banks of the Viar, from which he now crossed a little unfenced vineyard, and entered upon the road that terminated in the avenue. He had scarcely stepped into the public path, before two women, who had been stationed at the end of the ave-

nue, turned round and ran with full speed into the village, with loud exclamations and demonstrations apparently of joy. Vargas did not know how to account for this ; but the incidents of his life for the last few days had a tendency to alarm him lest some new prejudice or superstition might again be the cause of peril to him. He had been twice exorcised as the evil spirit, and had narrowly escaped being immolated at the shrine of a canonised bull : what misfortune awaited him now ? If he had known what road to pursue he would have postponed his hunger, but being ignorant how to proceed, and trusting to the sanctity of his dress and the bigotry of the people, he boldly advanced.

Having delayed a few minutes for consideration, and for adjusting his

frock, cord, and cowl, which, in the exercise of walking, he had loosened, he was further astonished during the pause by the loud ringing of bells of the parish church, accompanied, or rather confused by the ill-combined tingle of the chapel bell of the palace. As these peals were all joy-betokening sounds, he augured no ill, and proceeded. When he entered the avenue, a very picturesque scene presented itself:—The whole of the inhabitants of the village were collected, or collecting on either side of the great gates of the palace, through which a procession of twelve or fourteen young women, dressed in white, and each bearing a large wax taper lighted, was passing. A parochial priest was arranging this little procession with all the anxious bustle of a dancing-master when directing his

pupils on a benefit ball night. The curate's cares extended also to the disposing and restraining of the little crowd that flanked the procession, in which necessary duty he was assisted by two boys in surplices, a sacristan, and three or four servants in gorgeous state liveries.

As Vargas approached, the procession and the people also advancing towards him, the exclamations of the latter became intelligible, and threw some little light upon the affair ;
“ Glory to the sainted hermit ! ”
“ What honour to Montemolin ! ”
“ Oh that he would die amongst us, and leave us his relics ! ” When the whole arrived at the stone cross, the Christian standard which is posted at the immediate approach of every city, town, and village in all Spain, they were within a few paces of Vargas,

who was slowly advancing. The curate imposed silence upon the people, and, giving the signal, the white apparelled damsels commenced the Psalm “*Expectans expectavi.*” It was well executed; the bass voices of the curate and the sacristan supporting the higher tones of the women. The effect of the whole was striking; and Vargas stood still while the sacred music was performing. As soon, however, as it was over, he advanced;—the people could no longer be restrained; they all ran forward, and the curate and his white women, finding that they could not preserve order, deserted the ranks, and vied with the villagers in the rapidity and disorder of their movements. Vargas was surrounded in an instant. Those who were fortunate enough to reach him first fell upon their knees before him, some

kissing his feet, others the lower parts of his garment. Those who followed, came so violently upon the first, that they nearly fell over them, and all endeavoured at the utmost extent of their arms to touch him. Every person presented a rosary to be blessed, and those who could not get near enough to place the rosaries within his touch, unceremoniously threw them at his frock, that at least they might be sanctified by coming in contact with his holy garment.

Poor Vargas begged, implored, expostulated; he could not even make himself heard, until, finding his temper excited by the outrages he received, he judged it best to restrain himself and submit, lest he should really become angry, and get the worst of it. Silently, therefore, he submitted for a while to what he could

neither escape from nor understand, occasionally raising his hands, as if in the act of blessing, to comply with the demands of these mistaken people. The curate, after having endeavoured in vain for some time to procure silence, at length succeeded by bawling out in a stentorian voice, "We are withholding spiritual succour from the dying Marchioness."

"To the palace!" "To the palace!" was echoed around.

The curate, however, persisted in commanding silence, and his paramount authority at length obtained it; but before Vargas could speak he immediately addressed him in these words—

"Holy and highly favoured man,—saint upon earth, and sainted that will be in heaven,—we humbly adore the miraculous interposition that has been

employed in bringing you here so soon ; upon the wings of angels no doubt, as the blessed Bishop of Jaen travelled over sea and land upon the back of an evil spirit. The Marchioness of Montemolin, whose eternal salvation has been the object of this miracle, has been no less miraculously preserved in the body to await your arrival. Let us hasten to conduct you to the dying Señora."

" Reverend curate," said Vargas—but his voice was drowned in the universal exclamation of " Glory, and worship, and honour to the saint !"—" Long live Saint Nicolas of the Point !" and in an instant four stout peasants lifted him gently but forcibly off his legs, and carried him in triumph towards the palace ; while, in the very moment of being raised, his cord was loosened, and the long row of black

beads which was tied to it was torn from it by the devout crowd. In an instant the string of the beads was broken, and the beads themselves were distributed amongst the overjoyed villagers as precious relics of extraordinary virtue. The struggle to possess these inestimable treasures relieved Vargas for a moment from the pressure which had before inconvenienced him ; but the clamour was, if possible, greater, and he was quite unable to make himself heard.

During his strange ride to the patio of the palace of Montemolin, Vargas could not help smiling internally at the quaint vicissitude of occurrences which had befallen him in twenty-four hours. The morning before, about the same hour, he had been apostrophised as a demon incarnate ; at that moment he was exalted and worship-

ped as a saint upon earth. Nor could he forbear pitying the incurable blindness of the degraded minds around him there and every where else in his unhappy country. Every thing acted from one spring—superstition ; every thing not tangible was miraculous ; every misfortune was by diabolical agency ; nothing was too monstrous to be believed ; nothing was too idolatrous to be practised. Every mind thought on in one beaten track, and in this sense it was true in Spain that “ *todo camino va à Roma,*” every road leads to Rome. With these ideas came also the unpleasant reflection that in proportion to the joy of the people at his approach would be their disappointment at finding they had mistaken his person. He had had too recent a specimen of a Spanish mob to wish to encounter another ; and he

thought that he had better give in to the mistake until he could withdraw himself, than run the risk of their rage and disappointment.

He had settled this point in his mind just as he was placed upon his legs in the patio of the palace. Although the plebeian crowd was excluded from thence, yet the number of retainers and servants of the Marchioness made up a multitude almost as great, and quite as importunate and as devout as the unliveried many without. Their petitions for blessings were as clamorous, and sounded more in the quadrangle than those of the villagers had done in the air; and their anxiety to obtain relics was apparently greater, for he detected one woman more bold and more zealous than the rest, who had appropriated to herself a large piece of his sainted garment, by the

furtive application of a pair of sheers. Vargas now began to entertain serious apprehensions of the total demolition of his habit, and he eagerly obeyed the sign of the curate, who pointed out to him the way to the apartment of the Marchioness. But before he enters into it, I will endeavour to explain to the reader the cause of his strange reception at Montemolin.

Upon an elevated spot in the Sierra Morena, which, from its singular shape and insulated situation, was called *el punto*, the point, there stood one of those Ermitas, or little chapels, already mentioned as being frequently erected in places difficult of access. The ermita of San Sebastian at Alange, the abode of Father Lawrence, was one of these; and the ermita del Punto was rendered still more famous than that of Alange by

the uncommon sanctity and miraculous power ascribed to Father Nicolas, who resided there. There were authenticated legends of several miracles which he had performed, and canonization was anxiously anticipated as the certain result of his death. It is not necessary to interrupt the thread of my story, nor to keep Vargas waiting at the door of the Marchioness of Montemolin's apartment, while I recount the several miracles he wrought, and adduce the respectable testimony which was borne to the facts. It may suffice shortly to record one remarkable circumstance, and to refer the reader to the archives of the cathedral church of Seville, to prove the truth of what I state. A woman, who was about to become a mother, applied to the sainted man to save her, if possible, from the agonies

which awaited her. The good-natured hermit stated the primeval curse which attended her deceiving sex, and declared that the pain must be borne. "Could not you bear it for me, holy father?" said the timid daughter of Eve. By what further inducements she supported her request is not stated in the Sevillian archives; but we are told that the father consented, and the woman went away satisfied. Time passed on, and the hermit, probably not being aware of what he had undertaken, forgot his promise, until one day, whilst performing mass in his little chapel, he was reminded of it by the infliction of most excruciating pains which lasted at intervals for several hours. In the mean time the woman was bringing twins into the world without the slightest pain or inconvenience. Whether father Nicolas

ever repeated this surprising miracle is doubtful; the probability is that he did not, for there is no repetition mentioned in the archives, and the mountainous country in the neighbourhood of el Punto has always been very thinly populated, both of which circumstances afford good ground for the belief that the hermit had had enough, and relieved no more ladies from the consequences of the curse on Eve. However, whether by the repetition of this, or the performance of other miracles, father Nicolas's fame increased and spread far.

To return to the current of my story;—the Marchioness of Montemolin having seen the sun seventy times from the same place in our orbit, had seen him there for the last time. Her mediciner told her so, and her own feelings ratified his sentence.

The old Marchioness declared that she had matters of extreme importance to adjust; that she had sins upon her soul too heavy to be lifted off by a common curate; a saint might scarce be able to perform the task. Montemolin stood within reach of the rays of father Nicolas's glory; his miracles were the legends of every old woman in the village, and the wonder of all, young and old. The Marchioness, therefore, determined to make use of his agency with the saints for pardon, and she accordingly despatched a messenger to the ermita del Punto, desiring him to bring the holy man with all decent haste. The messenger had set off from Montemolin on the evening before the appearance of Vargas in the village, and his return might be expected, in the ordinary course of events, in twenty-four

or thirty hours ; “ *but*,” says the village curate, who was a great partisan of the hermit’s fame, “ *but* extraordinary men act in extraordinary manners :—Juan, or Thomas, or Pepito, might go to the Punto and back in a day and a night, but what is to prevent father Nicolas from coming here in half the time ? In a day ! aye, in an hour ! —What was done by the blessed Bishop of Jaen, who, leaping on the back of a bad spirit, flew from Andalusia to Rome, absolved the pope, and flew back in a night over the mountains and the rivers, over Pyrenees and Alps ? ”

“ Marry, but that legend hath two legs to run upon,” quoth the sacristan, who was a simple-minded man, intoxicated with a shallow draft of theological learning, with no chance of

being sobered by a deeper libation.*
“ As I’ve heard it told, the saint-bishop went not over Alps nor Pyrenees, but over the sea; more by token that the demon endeavoured to make him mention but once the sacred name that he might give him the slip, and let him tumble into the water.”

“ Upon the rock! not into the water,” replied the priest. “ Thou art misled, Perico; and for proof, what sayest thou to his Excellency’s hat, which is preserved at Rome to this day, and which is still covered with the snow that fell on him in crossing the Alps.”

“ Has your paternity seen his Excellency’s hat?”

* Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring;
There shallow drafts intoxicate the brain,
But drinking largely sobers us again.

POPE.

“ Seen it ! Perico ;—aye, have I, by my reliance on the assertions of holy men that have seen it. Little should we see an we borrowed not other men’s eyes, Perico.”

“ When your paternity’s time serveth, I would like to hold further discourse with you upon this miracle, seeing that I travail with some doubt thereupon ; for it being, as I understand, allowed by learned men that devils find it terribly hard to carry the holy cross, and the Bishop of Jaen, doubtless wearing his breastcross at all times——”

“ He had left it at home that morning, Perico,” said the curate, interrupting him ; “ and time serveth not now for the labour of opening thy closed caput to the mystery of this miracle. If it knocketh at the door let it knock on, whilst I tell thee that

if father Nicolas takes the journey that I have supposed he might do, his post-horse will not be a demon, but, peradventure, an angel, who will bear both cross and corpus on his wings, and fly the lighter."

"That indeed were an inimitable post-horse," replied the sacristan.

"Mark me, Perico," continued his paternity; "I say not that 'twill come to pass,—but it will be no marvel to me if we should see father Nicolas arrive before noon to-morrow, though the groom will scarce be at the Punto to breakfast:—and if he should—mind I said it;—remember I declared it. I have not officiated as curate of St. Isidore's at Montemolin for the last twenty years for nothing. I have not meddled with heavenly things so long without having a portion of heavenly intelligence."

This conversation took place at Montemolin upon the evening when the messenger was despatched to bring father Nicolas. The natural consequence of it was that the sacristan informed the *ama*, or housekeeper, that father Jerome had received mysterious communication that very possibly the hermit of the Point might be brought to Montemolin on the wings of angels, and consequently that he might arrive early the next day. From the *ama* it was rapidly conveyed to the gossips of the village, with the small and unimportant alteration that father Jerome had mysteriously received positive assurance that the hermit of the Point was to be conveyed to the assistance of the Marchioness in a miraculous manner, and would undoubtedly arrive on the next morning, instead of the day after, on which he had been

expected. All the villagers were in amazement at the promised miracle, which, however, in no degree fell short of the many others which it was on record that he had performed. The poor curate found in a very short time that his character for sanctity and truth was entirely at stake upon the occurrence of, to say the least, a very improbable event. He protested, he vowed, but all in vain ; his words had been vouched for, and it was only his modesty now which prevented his assuming to himself the importance which such a prophetic annunciation was calculated to give him. All that the trembling priest could do was to out-face the sacristan in declaring that he had stated the period of father Nicolas's arrival to be some time before night-fall, instead of before noon.

As the villagers gave more credit to

the wonderful story as at first delivered, than to the amended second edition of the curate, preparations were immediately made for a suitable reception of so exalted a personage. Two women were posted at the end of the avenue, from the very dawn of day, to give due notice upon the first appearance of the saint. These women expected to behold a man sitting astride upon the back of an angel, surrounded by a number of little winged faces, like those which were carved at the spring of the arches in the church; but father Jerome, anxious not to add a disappointment in this respect to that which he fully expected they would meet with in the main point, very prudently assured them that angels were visible only to the saints, and that most probably father Nicolas would dismount at some

short distance from the village, and walk in with all the humility of his Christian character.

Father Jerome could hardly believe his senses when the videttes came running in with the intelligence that the holy man approached. Many a man tells an imagined story so often, that, what between averring it as a truth himself, and hearing it referred to as such upon his authority by others, he really begins to believe it: the good curate was almost in a similar situation; the vague supposition to which he had been excited by the opposition of the sacristan to the miracle of the Bishop of Jaen, more than by any probability in the thing supposed, now appeared to himself in the same light in which it had been placed by its progress through the village. At all events, whether it was so or not,

there could be no possible harm in taking the honour which was so irresistibly forced upon him, and so amply confirmed by the event. These arguments passed rapidly through the curate's brain, while he was ascertaining the truth of the report which was brought in ; and when he was fully satisfied upon this latter point, he cast into oblivion his protest of the night before, and boldly exclaimed, " Did not I foretell this ? did I not promise you this miracle ? "

Every thing was now in the bustle of preparation, and, as not a moment was to be lost, father Jerome made ample amends for his tardiness in arrangement on the evening before by his promptness now. The reader has already seen the effects of his marshalling, and Vargas has felt them : I will, therefore, hasten to relieve the

latter from the importunity and devotion of the people that still surrounded him in the corridor of the palace, and admit him into the chamber of the dying Marchioness de Montemolin. But as his conference with that lady was important, it shall have a new chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

So writhes the mind remorse hath riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed for heaven,
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death.

BYRON.

VARGAS was ushered into a state bed-chamber by a wanded seneschal. It was a long apartment, having several glass doors opening into it, and between these doors were placed small silver tables surmounted by looking glasses framed in silver. Besides these there were several *escaparates*, or enclosed cabinets, with glass fronts filled with precious stones, valuable curiosities, and sainted relics, disposed in different parts of the room. At one end stood the bed of the Marquesa,

of rich gold and green damask, and lined with silver brocade. It stood under a canopy of green velvet richly gilded, and supporting a thin silver gauze curtain, one of the greatest luxuries of the rich in Spain at that time, and meant to secure them from the intrusion of musquitos and other insects:—common beds were alike without curtain or tester. The magnificent covering of the bed was hid towards the upper end by part of the sheet, which, as well as the pillow, was profusely trimmed with fine English lace, extremely broad and in double rows. This was another display of luxurious distinction, for English lace, being at that time an almost unattainable article, was most eagerly sought after, and preferred to the finest Brussels lace, which might be called a colonial produce in Spain.

This ostentatious magnificence surrounded the shrivelled form of a wizened old woman. The covering lay evenly over her, and she had all the appearance of a body lying in state. "The ruling passion e'en in death remained," and vanity must have eaten the core of her heart, and left it a very shell, for, even at the awful brink of an eternity, which must have been hopeless to her, loaded as her soul was with sin, instead of preparing her mind to meet her Maker, she had employed her attendants in decking her body to receive the honoured and sainted hermit: she had had her head bedizzened with the tawdry trappings of vanity, and her cheeks, chin, and forehead, loaded with a double coating of crimson.

As Vargas approached, two waiting women who stood by the bed knelt

down, and crossed themselves devoutly. The Marchioness discovered the skin-enveloped skeleton of an arm, and did the same, saying in a voice which from its hollow tone seemed to proceed from the very depth of her lungs, "your blessing, holy man, favoured of the saints."

"May the spirit of true repentance bring you within the salvation of the new and glorious covenant," said Vargas solemnly.

The Marchioness desired to be left alone with the holy man, and she was immediately obeyed. There was a long pause, but Vargas, although he had made up his mind not to run the risk of discovering the mistake which had been made, yet, being anxious not to be guilty of gratuitous falsehood, was silent, and the pause was filled up in his mind by an uneasy applica-

tion to his conscience, to ascertain how far any circumstances would justify his receiving the old woman's confession under a false character. His conscience left the matter undetermined, although it leaned towards his interest, by suggesting the idea of the greater good which he might do to her soul than could be done by a juggling hermit, who had established a character by falsehood and impiety. This is a sad trick of conscience ; and hackneyed as this sophistry is, I am afraid it has as much effect upon our conduct now as it had two hundred years ago when it acted the traitor with Vargas.

“ Most reverend father,” said the Marquesa at length, “ they tell me that I am dying.”

“ Religion should have told you that ten years ago,” replied Vargas ;

“ if you had attended to what she said you would not have been taken by surprise now.”

“ I fear it is too true,” continued the lady ; “ and, good father, I have sent for you because I have great need of absolution, and no strength for penance. You must save me for the sake of the works of the saints ;—you are yourself a sainted man. If indulgence may be procured by your interference, let it be done. Immaculate virgin ! I have much need of their assistance.”

Vargas was considering how he could inform her with most probability of making her understand him, of the utter insufficiency of her reliance on the works of the saints, and of the egregious folly of her hope. He was aware, that to preach such a doctrine to her at such a moment, when the

light of her mind glimmered at its end, would be absolutely hopeless, unless it pleased Providence to vouchsafe the saving Spirit to the wretched creature in a manner which would have been really miraculous. Quite at a loss therefore how to proceed in his reply, he was inwardly addressing a petition for direction and assistance by that same Spirit, when the Marchioness turning suddenly with a strength of which he had not considered her present state capable, sat upright in the bed, and clenching both her bony hands, she exclaimed—

“ I have shed blood, father!— There, there, it is said :—it has been unconfessed, unabsolved, till now ;— it is told,—’tis done—” and with a deep groan, her weak frame fell back into its former situation.

“ Merciful power have pity upon

this poor wretched sinner!" ejaculated Vargas; and he continued to pray internally, having knelt at the bedside, until the Marchioness recovered and again opened her eyes.

"Oh father," said she, "if you could but know the struggles that it has cost me to come to this point;—to have said it alone is penance enough to purchase absolution."

"Hold not so weak, so proud a doctrine, my daughter," replied Vargas; "no penance is sufficient to purchase absolution. When we have done all that flesh and blood can bear, we have done nothing; no, nothing towards our own salvation. The sacrifice of an atoning Deity will make up our deficiency, but then the benefit of that sacrifice is only promised to us upon conditions which we must fulfil, or we are lost—Repentance—"

“ I have repented,” said the Marchioness, impatiently, “ I do repent, I tell you. Father Nicolas, I will endow a convent, and build it near El punto.”

Vargas was about to interrupt her, but she stopped him by fretfully repeating, “ I do repent ; and I sent for you to absolve me, father. Hear me,—listen to my confession, and then talk to me of terms for absolution.”

Vargas allowed her to proceed, and she continued, “ I had a daughter, father, and no son.—Aye, there lies the root of all,—no son. The Marquis of Montemolin no heir. By the life of Saint Isidor, but ’tis enough to excite to any thing ! ” and she muttered two or three times, “ no son,—no son ! ”

After a short pause she became more calm and went on. “ My daugh-

ter grew up, and our disappointed hopes centered upon her making a powerful alliance. This we thought had been accomplished in marrying her to the Marquis of Velada, who possessed both rank and wealth, favour at court and fame in the world. But the fiend was at work in my fortune; my daughter had just borne him a son, when a woman applied to see me in private; the wench was fair, but not more fair than my daughter; who dares say that she equalled her?"

Her agitated feelings overpowered her emaciated frame, she turned away her head and groaned. Vargas, who had continued kneeling, prayed fervently.

"Yes, pray for me, good father. I fear I know not how to pray, and I am going to tell of things——oh——"

After a few minutes she became more calm and proceeded.

“The idiot wretch came to move my pity and to ask my assistance, forsooth ;—my assistance and in what ? to degrade my own daughter—my only daughter,—the solitary scion of the house of Montemolin. The fool brought me proofs—indubitable proofs—parchments with seals and rubrics—proofs that she, and she only, was the wedded wife of Velada ; she was in my closet—we were alone——.”

“You murdered her !” exclaimed Vargas, starting up in horror.

“False priest, thou liest—she lived for years ;” and the Marchioness’s extreme agitation again overcame her.

Some time elapsed before either were sufficiently calm to speak ; at length the Marchioness said in a low tone, “you do your office ill, father,

to fret a tortured spirit already on the rack."

"I crave your pardon, daughter," said Vargas.

After a while the Marquesa continued. "If thou wouldst have waited, thou mightst perhaps have talked of murder; but that word should come from me, I want to hear nought but absolution from you. This wench was the daughter of a poor Aragonese hidalgo, who had more nobility than bread. The father was killed in battle and the daughter was starving. Her pretty face warmed Velada, and her cunning contrived to get such command over him, that he privately married her. He grew satiated, and deserted her; he left her to die and thought that she had died; but the devil kept her alive that he might secure the destruction of my

soul. She had a son, and she brought the infant with her to my presence—aye—” said she, perceiving a movement made by Vargas, “now you may start—now you may rise from your knees though I shall have most need for prayer. That boy was the legitimate Marquis of Velada—and what was my daughter’s son? What was my daughter herself? Holy Mary! who could resist such provocation, such temptation!”

Vargas attempted to speak, but his voice failed him, he listened with intense interest.

“I was in Plasencia at the time. The woman was imprisoned in the Carmelite convent there till she took the vows, and she died years afterwards a holy nun:—the child—oh—I had a confessor—a friar, he took away the child——”

“ A confessor ! a priest ! ” ejaculated Vargas.

“ Aye, and a sanctified one, and a famed one, too,—Father Lawrence, of the Emperor’s Monastery of Saint Justus.”

“ Sacred powers ! how wonderful are thy ways,” exclaimed Vargas, struck, as no doubt the reader is also, by the extraordinary chain of circumstances which had brought him from that very father Lawrence’s abode, to hear this confession of his wretched victim.

“ Wonderful indeed ! ” continued the Marquesa, “ I would give worlds now that that child had never gone into his hands, or had come out of them alive, for its blood, though spilt by him, lies heavy upon my soul.”

“ You would give worlds you say that that child lived,” said Vargas :—

“wretched sinner, you have nothing in this world to give, and you are hastening to another where you have no hope.”

“I *have* hope in the next world,” cried the Marchioness. “for I have *much* to give in this ; I tell you I will endow a convent so richly, father Nicolas, that——”

“I am not father Nicolas, but I am sent by heaven to bring you the only ray of hope, the only thought of peace that remains for you. I can restore the life of the child : I can wipe out the foul crime of murder from your account in the great book on high,—but this can only be upon one condition—one hard penance.”

“Holy Mary, virgin and mother !” ejaculated the astonished Marchioness, and she gazed upon him with all the credulous devotion of Catholic-saint

worship ; she repeatedly crossed herself.

“ Speak,” said Vargas, “ are you willing to perform the only penance upon which you can be released from the horrid weight of human blood that hangs upon ? ”

“ So it be possible to a dying mortal, I swear to do it, blessed saint,” cried the Marchioness.

“ You must repair the wrong you have done ; you must restore the injured victim to his just rights ; you must proclaim to the world that he is the true heir of his father’s honours and fortune.”

“ Thou ravest,” cried the lady ; “ the child ceased to live ; woe is me, must I repeat it ? My order deprived him of existence,—but,” she added imploringly, “ but you will absolve me ? ”

“ I cannot absolve you ;—no human created being can absolve you. He that made you can and will absolve you when he sees that you sincerely repent,—when he knows that your heart is truly turned to him. One step alone can give you hope of this—a real repentance shown forth by immediate restitution.”

“ Madman, or saint, or devil—restitution ! to whom ? The accursed infant perished ! ”

“ I will produce that very infant, grown a man to claim it, if from your heart you repent your guilt and prove that repentance by restitution.”

“ Sainted apostle ! holy virgin !—what do I hear ! angel of light, what must I do ? ”

“ You must deposit in my hands those same parchment proofs which you received from the true Marchio-

ness of Velada, and you must pray fervently that Heaven may accept your tardy, insufficient penance, for the sake of Him who died for your sins."

"Proclaim my daughter nameless and disgraced, and her child a bastard! Thou art a demon, and no saint—I will not do it."

"Then dream not of pardon nor of happiness in the long, long life you are about to commence. Make haste to prepare thee for the unquenchable fire,—the ever-gnawing worm. Millions upon millions of years will you groan over this refusal to receive an unhopèd-for hope. Heaven has sent me in vain :—take your fate :—I leave you."

He made a motion to go : the skeleton form of the Marchioness half threw itself forth from the bed to de-

tain him. Her deep sunken eyes far within the recesses of her scarcely covered forehead, gave her the appearance of a person looking through a skull as from a mask. The sallow complexion and wrinkled texture of her face contrasted so ill with the incongruous coating of crimson by which it was surmounted, that it strengthened this idea, and the whole creature seemed like a ghastly representation of death in a masquerade.

“For mercy leave me not, sainted man. I will listen to you;—I will consider what you say.”

“Consider rather the alternative to your soul,” said Vargas; “your soul which cannot die,—your soul which must live to all eternity, whether in torment unutterable, or in happiness and glory;—you are now to determine.”

“I do determine,” repeated the

lady, “ I will determine;—but only remember what you ask me:—write myself down a murderer,—write down my daughter a —— oh, her spirit would rise from the grave to upbraid me.”

“ Her spirit,” replied Vargas, “ is now stationed,—her doom is now sealed: nothing upon this earth can interest her more,—and your spirit in a few short moments will be in exactly the same situation as to this world:—as to the next you have your choice of happiness and misery. Never had human being such an offer before, such an opportunity of wiping out the crimes of a sinful life.”

“ Father, I will build a convent,—all that I possess shall go to endow it:—ten thousand masses shall be said in it yearly for my soul; but this that you require, I cannot, I will not do.”

“ Miserable sinner then, your fate is

fixed ;—not as many masses as could be said in every church in Spain for a thousand years, will avail to release you of one hour's suffering. If I leave this room you die——”

Vargas was proceeding earnestly to represent the horror that would attend and follow her death, but he was stopped at these words by a shrill scream from the Marchioness, who exclaimed—

“ I knew it from the first ;—an internal voice whispered me when you entered that I should die when you went away.—Stay, stay, I implore you.—Sit you down, and let me but speak to you.”

“ I will neither sit nor listen until I have these said parchments in my hands.”

“ You will not leave me then all day,—nor to-morrow,—nor——”

“ The parchments,” said Vargas.

“ You shall have them if you will remain.”

“ When I have them I will tarry for a season with you,” he replied.

“ Do not approach the door then,” said she ; and, continuing a fixed gaze at him, she with some difficulty resumed her lying posture.

The superstitious idea that her spark of life would fail the moment that Vargas left her sight, had taken full possession of this miserable woman’s diseased imagination. Some untraceable concatenation had produced it in her mind, when he first appeared ; the extraordinary and mysterious character which he had assumed, as a messenger sent by Heaven, which her Catholic mind naturally understood *from* Heaven, had very much increased it, and thus pre-disposed she interpreted his unfinished

speech into a positive assertion of the truth of her presentiment. It is no wonder, therefore, that the idea should so thoroughly possess her ; and it was most fortunate that it did, for without some such supernatural ally, Vargas would probably have found it impossible to effect his benevolent and Christian purpose.

In a faint voice the Marchioness proceeded to give him directions how to open the spring of an iron coffer which was let into the wall, and which contained various parchments, jewels, bags of money, and a small casket, which she desired him to remove. This contained the fatal documents, which the guilty woman had placed there soon after she had acquired the possession of them, and had never had sufficient courage to examine them since. Vargas took the papers, and

secured them in his bosom ; he then replaced the casket and closed the coffer.

The extreme agitation of the Marchioness had excited her beyond even her usual power, as a burning fever gives supernatural strength for a time ; but the overwrought system now sunk below the level at which Vargas had found her, and the spirit seemed to be upon the wing. There was an utter prostration of strength which prevented her from moving a limb, but she listened with languid attention to the account which Vargas gave of the miraculous saving of the child from death, even after it had been cast down the dreadful precipice by the murderous confessor. He knew no more than this ; but without attempting to go further he earnestly assured her that her horrible purpose had

never been executed, and he was proceeding to declare to her his intention of seeking out the person who had been so providentially preserved, when he was interrupted by a very loud and general bustle, and sound of voices in the patio of the palace. Some unconnected exclamations were audible, which sufficiently indicated that the cause of this confusion was the arrival of a report that another father Nicolas had made his appearance at a little distance from the avenue, and that he was known to be the very hermit, because he was accompanied by the very groom who had been sent in search of him.

This was disagreeable intelligence to Vargas. He turned to the Marchioness; the hand of death was upon her;—her spirit had been fluttering, when the slight excitement occasioned

by the sudden noise from the patio had given it the final impulse. It took flight almost as if having been fastened down to earth by the leaden weight of the crime it had imagined, it had sprung heavenward when Vargas removed the detaining burthen by relieving it of the perpetration.

Vargas's prayer for the reception of her soul was very short; but under his circumstances its brevity may perhaps be pardoned. He peeped through the window, and to his surprise he found the patio entirely deserted; he opened the door, and saw that the corridor was equally so. Curiosity and surprise had impelled every creature in the palace and the village to try who could first unravel the mystery of this second arrival, and all had run towards the avenue. Vargas had assumed the frock and cord as a very

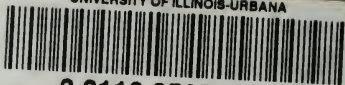
useful disguise, and he now laid it aside to effect the same purpose. He deposited his religious habiliments on a seat by the bedside of the deceased Marchioness; and making the most of his time, he without much difficulty discovered the manner of egress from the back part of the palace. By leaping several garden walls he managed in a few minutes to be out of the village of Montemolin, and taking a direction not likely to bring him in contact either with the villagers or father Nicolas, he continued his journey southward with all possible speed.

END OF VOL. II.





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